

# Editage Language Enhancement Guide

## Communicate your research in fluent English

Through this report, your Editage English Coach will help you

- ✓ improve your understanding of English language rules and best practices so that you can gradually write like a native English speaker,
- ✓ communicate your research in fluent English to your target readers across the globe,
- ✓ understand academic language style and conventions, and
- ✓ write papers more confidently in English.

The report contains 3 parts:

- Overall comments on your language skills and guidance for improvements,
- Detailed examples of focus areas found in your original text and corresponding suggestions for accurate ways in which to communicate those examples,
- Recommendations for reading to help you improve your language skills.

## Note from your English Coach

Dear author,

My name is James, and I am your English Coach for this project. I have 10 years of experience in providing English language guidance. I have published papers in *Conservation Genetics* (IF: 2.283) and *Advances in Genetics* (IF: 4.689).

Publishing academic work in international English language journals can be challenging for native English authors and ESL (English as a Second Language) authors alike, I assure you! Through this report, my goal is to help you overcome this challenge gradually and with confidence.

Below, I have shared my assessment of your paper from the perspective of academic English accuracy and usage. I have read and understood your paper thoroughly before offering suggestions. Studying my recommendations below and applying them will gradually help you become proficient in English.

All the best! All good research deserves to be shared with the world!

Grammar	<p><b>Example 1:</b> “Almost species exhibited red coloration under visible light,...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “Under visible light, <i>almost all species</i> appeared red...”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> “Almost” is an adverb, i.e., a word that modifies an adjective, verb, or another adverb. Hence, it must always be followed by one of these three elements to ensure correct grammatical usage. In the original sentence, “almost” was followed by the noun “species,” and this was incorrect. I have corrected it by adding the adjective “all” in between “almost” and “species.” Generally, the adverb “almost” should always be followed by the adjective “all” when it is used before a noun.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Example 2:</b> “Competition in resources and survival...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “Competition <i>for</i> resources and survival...”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> Prepositions (in, for, on, etc.) are words that usually precede a noun to indicate the relationship of that noun to another element in a sentence. The use of prepositions after a noun varies according to the context in which they are used. For example, when referring to “competition” among individuals in a natural habitat, we would use the preposition “in” (i.e., Competition <b>in</b> a natural habitat); however, when referring to “competition” for something, we would use the preposition “for” (i.e., Competition <b>for</b> food).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Example 3:</b> “In addition to this predator-prey interaction, brachiopod survival on the sea bottom is also affected by competition among benthic organisms, which belongs to a similar guild.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “In addition to this predator-prey interaction, brachiopod survival at the sea bottom is also affected by competition among benthic organisms, <i>which belong</i> to a similar guild.”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> A singular subject (noun/pronoun) should be accompanied by a singular verb, and a plural subject should be accompanied by a plural verb. A clause beginning with the pronoun “which” usually provides additional information about the noun immediately before it. Therefore, it can act as a singular or plural pronoun, depending on the noun it replaces. In the original sentence, “which” would be plural because it is replacing the plural noun “benthic organisms”; therefore, it will have to be followed by the plural verb “belong” rather than the singular verb “belongs.”</li> </ul>

Sentence construction/ Phrasing	<p><b>Example 1:</b> “In previous experiments carried out in our laboratory [16], we have observed that the terebratulid brachiopod <i>Laqueus rubellus</i>, which is empire red in color, is difficult to be seen by a video scope under near-infrared illumination.”</p>
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- **English Coach’s revised version:** “*In our previous experiments* [16], we observed that the terebratulid brachiopod *Laqueus rubellus*, which is empire red, is difficult *to view using* a videoscope under near-infrared illumination.”

- **Explanation for the change:** Avoid lengthy, informal, and colloquial sentences in scientific manuscripts. In the original sentence, the introductory phrase ends with a citation number, which implies that the following results are from a previous study. Therefore, you need not specify that the “experiments were carried out in your laboratory”; instead, you only need to mention “In our previous experiments...” Moreover, the expression “is difficult to be seen by” is colloquial and sounds informal. I have replaced this with “is difficult to view,” which is more formal and concise.

**Example 2:** “The environmental conditions (e.g., water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, chlorophyll a, and nutrient concentrations) at the bottom of inner Suruga Bay are same over a wide area...”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “The environmental conditions (e.g., *water temperature; pH; and the concentrations of chlorophyll a, dissolved oxygen, and nutrients*) at the bottom of inner Suruga Bay are stable over a wide area...”

- **Explanation for the change:** When listing items in a series, always ensure that the relationships between the items are clear. In the original sentence, the list contained the word “concentrations” at the end; however, it was unclear whether “concentrations” applied only to the item “nutrient” or to all items in the list. Moreover, “water temperature” and “pH” cannot have concentrations. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity, I grouped the items into three separate groups by using semicolons. This grouping clearly indicates that “concentrations” applies only to chlorophyll a, dissolved oxygen, and nutrients.

**Example 3:** “The reddish appearance of an object means that the red portion of the visible spectrum is reflected by its surface, while other wavelengths of visible light are absorbed.”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “*An object appears red if* the red portion of the visible spectrum is reflected by its surface while other wavelengths are absorbed.”

- **Explanation for the change:** Conciseness, i.e., expressing your thoughts in as few words as necessary, is preferred in scientific writing. An easy way to achieve conciseness in writing is to use a direct verb (action) instead of using a noun and a verb. For example, the expression “segmentation of the images was carried out” can be replaced with “the images were segmented,” which is clearer.

**Word choice**

**Example 1:** “...to remain more or less invisible...”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “...to remain *essentially* invisible...”

- **Explanation for the change:** In scientific writing, ideas need to be conveyed as concisely as possible. A way of doing this is to use concise alternatives to phrases. For example, the phrase “all over the world” can be replaced with the word “globally” or “worldwide.” Such alternatives can also lend a more formal tone to the sentence. For example, “gradually” is considered a more formal alternative to “little by little” and “essentially” is preferred over “more or less.”

**Example 2:** “If either the predator or the prey can’t adapt...”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “If either the predator or the prey *cannot* adapt...”

- **Explanation for the change:** Contractions are short words formed by combining two words using an apostrophe, e.g., “can’t,” “I’d,” and “aren’t.” Although the use of such contractions is acceptable in informal writing and conversation, their use is considered informal in scientific writing. Therefore, contractions should be replaced with their full forms. For example, “can’t,” “I’d,” and “aren’t” should be written as “cannot,” “I would,” and “are not,” respectively.

**Example 3:** “Sample location”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “*Sampling* location”
- **Explanation for the change:** Using the incorrect form of a word can change the meaning of a sentence/phrase. The word “sample” refers to an example, model, or illustration. Therefore, the original subheading “Sample Location” would imply that you are referring to an example/model/illustration of a location. In contrast, the word “sampling” refers to the process of collecting a sample, and hence, the heading “Sampling Location” would indicate that you are referring to locations from where you collected your samples.

**Academic language conventions**

**Example 1:** “The selective advantage of red coloration in the shell of *Laqueus rubellus* (a terebratulid brachiopod) was checked in terms of interactions of prey and predator.”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “*We examined* the selective advantage of red shell coloration of the terebratulid brachiopod *Laqueus rubellus* in predator evasion.”
- **Explanation for the change:** Unless otherwise specified by a journal, sentences in the active voice are preferred over those in the passive voice. Most sentences in the passive voice omit the subject (or doer) of the action, and this can confuse the readers or result in awkward constructions. In the original sentence in passive voice, the “selective advantage” has been checked; however, it is unclear who checked it. Changing the sentence into the active voice clarifies that the check/examination was conducted by the authors (i.e., We examined...).

**Example 2:** “It has been taken for granted that the characteristic shell colors of living terebratulids may exhibit some predator deterrent effect...”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “*Such characteristic shell colors* have been believed to have a predator-deterrent effect...”
- **Explanation for the change:** A pronoun is a word that can be used instead of a noun to avoid repeating the noun (it, he, they, etc.). To ensure correct usage, a pronoun must refer to a valid noun that has been previously introduced (e.g., The **boys** were late. Hence, **they** missed the game). However, in the original sentence, the pronoun “it” does not refer to any previously introduced noun and instead acts as an “empty pronoun” that has been introduced merely to begin the sentence. Such empty pronouns (and constructions containing them) are best avoided in academic writing because they make the text unnecessarily lengthy.

**Example 3:** “Counts of each grayscale plot among the individuals are significantly different (Figure 4;  $P < 0.001$ , pairwise ANOVA).”

- **English Coach’s revised version:** “The counts of each grayscale plot among the individuals *were significantly* different (Figure 4;  $P < 0.001$ , pairwise ANOVA).”
- **Explanation for the change:** The use of verb tense varies across different sections of a manuscript. In the Results section of a manuscript, we usually report the study

findings. Because these results were obtained in the past, we report them in the past tense. However, tense usage in the results section also depends on the context. When the emphasis is on the finding, the past tense is used, e.g., **The ABC experiment yielded XYZ results (Figure 1)**, but when the emphasis is on the figure containing the results, the present tense is used, e.g., **Figure 1 shows the results of the ABC experiment.**

<b>Punctuation</b>	<p><b>Example 1:</b> “...many living terebratulids have shells with distinctive coloration (pink, orange, red- and red-brown).”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “...many living terebratulids have shells with distinctive coloration (pink, orange, red, <i>and</i> red-brown).”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> In American English, a comma is inserted before the conjunction that precedes the last element of a series (e.g., bread, eggs, <b>and</b> milk). This comma is called the series comma and is inserted for clarity. Although this comma is not commonly used in British English, its usage is gaining acceptance. In British English, it’s called the Oxford comma.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Example 2:</b> “256 shades of grayscale histogram”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “<i>256-shade</i> grayscale histogram”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> A compound adjective is formed by two words that jointly describe a noun (e.g., “256” and “shade” in “256-shade grayscale histogram”). Such compound adjectives are usually hyphenated to indicate that they form a single unit. The use of the hyphen also aids clarity. However, if the first word of a compound adjective is an adverb ending with “-ly” then the compound adjective should not be hyphenated (e.g., <b>highly evolved</b> predators).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Example 3:</b> “<i>Laqueus rubellus</i> and the vision systems of its predators may have experienced selective pressure for optical evasion and detection ability of the photoreceptor, respectively.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>English Coach’s revised version:</b> “<i>L. rubellus</i> and its predators may have experienced selective pressure —the former for developing optical evasion ability and the latter for developing photoreceptor ability to detect long-wavelength light.”</li> <li>• <b>Explanation for the change:</b> The em dash (—) can be used in a sentence to emphasize or highlight the information provided after it. In the above example, the use of the em dash after “selective pressure” indicates to the reader that the following information is important.</li> </ul>

## RECOMMENDED READING

As a bonus, I have shared a list of articles divided by areas of improvement. I do hope you find them informative!

Area of improvement	Description
Grammar	<a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/index.html</a>
Sentence construction	<a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/6-actionable-tips-to-improve-academic-writing">https://www.editage.com/insights/6-actionable-tips-to-improve-academic-writing</a> <a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/index.html</a>

Word choice	<a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/a-vocabulary-lesson-for-clear-writing-commonly-confused-words">https://www.editage.com/insights/a-vocabulary-lesson-for-clear-writing-commonly-confused-words</a>
Academic language convention	<a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/using-past-and-present-tenses-in-research-writing">https://www.editage.com/insights/using-past-and-present-tenses-in-research-writing</a> <a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/how-to-effectively-use-active-and-passive-voice-in-research-writing">https://www.editage.com/insights/how-to-effectively-use-active-and-passive-voice-in-research-writing</a>
Punctuation	<a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/quick-tips-on-using-commas-brackets-and-dashes-in-a-research-paper">https://www.editage.com/insights/quick-tips-on-using-commas-brackets-and-dashes-in-a-research-paper</a> <a href="https://www.editage.com/insights/8-pros-and-cons-of-using-the-oxford-comma">https://www.editage.com/insights/8-pros-and-cons-of-using-the-oxford-comma</a> <a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/index.html</a>