

---

**COMP495:**  
**Academic Presentation and Writing Skills**  
**Writing Skills #1: Document Microstructure**

**Robert Dale**  
**Robert.Dale@mq.edu.au**

# What People Want: Writing Skills

---

- Improved ability to write and edit my written material; use of better words where necessary
- How to explain hard problems clearly
- Using appropriate words
- To learn more ways to express myself while being grammatically correct
- A good understanding of proper referencing and structure of academic papers
- Better grammar, more words
- Better at expressing the flow of ideas

# What People Want: Presentation Skills

---

- To be more confident speaking in front of others
- More confidence
- To allow others to better understand me
- How to explain hard things briefly
- To express ideas fluently
- Better timing skills
- To be a better presenter
- How to be more interactive

# Punctuation, Typography and Structure

---

- There are three sets of units dollars and cents pounds and pennies and francs and centimes.

# Common Errors

---

Johns brother and sister is close friends of us. There relationship is one based on there complimentary skills. Its not something that encourages independance alot, and it is'nt always the most good thing for personnel develepment. The bestest approach is to making contact early however not every one can do this.

# Today's Agenda

---

- Document Mechanics
- Document Microstructure

# Document Mechanics

---

- Use LaTeX rather than Word for your thesis
- If you must use Word, learn to use Word styles properly
- Give your documents sensible file names
- Include the date in the filename of a document
- Make sure your document has a cover page
- Always put your name and the date on documents

# Document Mechanics

---

- Make it easy for the reader to navigate your document
  - Always provide page numbers
  - Use numbered section headings
  - Number all your examples, tables and figures
  - For long documents (say, more than 20 pages), use a table of contents
- Care about presentation



# Macrostructure and Microstructure

---

- Think of macrostructure as everything above the level of the paragraph
- Think of microstructure as being from the paragraph level down

# Today's Agenda

---

- Document Mechanics
- Document Microstructure

# Logical Elements

---

- Paragraphs
- Sentences
- Headings
- Lists
- Quotes
- Typographic Conventions
- Citations
- References

# Paragraphs

---

- What are paragraphs for?
- How big should a paragraph be?
- Do paragraphs have a structure, and if so, what is it?

# Sentences

---

- What's a sentence?
- What kinds of sentences are there?
- Is it ok not to write in sentences?
- How do you use sentence-internal punctuation: commas, semi-colons, colons, dashes, parentheses?
- How many different kinds of dashes are there?

# Headings

---

- What's the purpose of a heading?
- Are headings sentences?
- How do you punctuate a heading, and what capitalisation do you use?

# Lists

---

- When should you use itemized lists (ie bullet points) and when should you use enumerated lists?
- How do you punctuate a list?
- What syntactic constraints are there on lists?

# Quotes

---

- When do you use quotes?
- How do you punctuate quotes?
- How do you attribute quotes?



# Typographic Conventions

---

- When do you use bold, *italics*, 'scare quotes', SMALL CAPS ...?
- The Principle of Declarative Formatting: see <http://www.ics.mq.edu.au/~rdale/resources/writingnotes/declform.html>

# Citations and References

---

- What is a citation and what is a reference?
- Parenthetical and syntactic citations
- What's the purpose of citations and references?
- How do you format references?

# Things That Appear in Reference Lists

---

- Entire Books
- Chapters in Edited Collections
- Papers in Conference or Workshop Proceedings
- Articles in Journals
- Technical Reports
- PhD Theses

# Parenthetical and Syntactic Citations

---

- See <http://www.ics.mq.edu.au/~rdale/resources/writingnotes/citations.html>
- A syntactic citation:
  - However, as argued by Jones [1990], this approach is inefficient.
- A parenthetical citation:
  - However, the cosine method [Jones 1990] is inefficient.

# Indicating the Rhetorical Role of a Citation

---

- Not so good:
  - There are many ways in which aggregation techniques have been used within sentence planning [Crowbar 1988].
- Possible interpretations for what we'll find in Crowbar 1988:
  - a list of ways in which aggregation techniques have been used in sentence planning
  - one way in which aggregation techniques has been used in sentence planning
  - information about aggregation techniques
  - information about sentence planning

# Indicating the Rhetorical Role of a Citation

---

- The not-so-good:
  - There are many ways in which aggregation techniques have been used within sentence planning [Crowbar 1988].
- Better:
  - There are many ways in which aggregation techniques have been used within sentence planning (see [Crowbar 1988] for a catalog of these).

# Pinpointing the Evidence

---

- Not so good:
  - It has sometimes been argued (see, for example, [Jones 1966]) that graph unification can be more efficiently implemented than term unification.
- Better:
  - It has sometimes been argued (see, for example, [Jones 1966, Section 4.6]) that graph unification can be more efficiently implemented than term unification.

# Microstructure

---

- Make sure you write in sentences, not in fragments
- Use itemized and enumerated lists -- but make sure you use appropriate list syntax
- Use typographic conventions consistently
- Do not misuse scare quotes
- Learn how to use colons and semi-colons to provide more structure to your sentences
- Make sure you format citations and bibliographic references properly



# What's Next

---

- Next week's class:
  - A Review of the Video'ed Presentations
- Your 3-page project description is due **FRIDAY 29th AUGUST** at 5pm by email