SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION

Effective academic writing requires good grammar, **spelling, and punctuation**. The sentence is the basic unit of academic writing. This may seem obvious, but in informal spoken English, people often use incomplete sentences.

Spelling

Spelling is important for exactly the same reason that grammar and punctuation are important: poor spelling makes for poor communication. Academic writing requires a high degree of accuracy, and this is reflected in the quality of the writing.

Words to watch

To and too

- To is used with the infinitive (to watch, to run, etc.) or with an indirect object (I gave the book to the student) or as a preposition (The Manager ran to the Fire Exit)
- Too is an adverb – it adds information to a verb: 'that athlete was too slow to win the race'. In addition, it can be used in the sense of also: 'The teacher, too, was puzzled by this suggestion'.

Their, there and they're

- Their is a possessive form (something belonging to 'them')
- There is an adverb, indicating location (over there)
- They're is a contraction of 'they are'

It's and its

- It's is a contraction of 'it is'
- Its is a possessive pronoun (it belongs to it: its properties, etc.)

Accept and except

- Accept is a verb, meaning to receive something (I accept that gift, they accepted this idea)
- Except can be a verb, except it is often used as a preposition meaning 'but' (I would accept that idea, except it is wrong)

Affect and effect

- Affect is a verb meaning to influence (Holiday arrangements have been badly affected by the weather conditions)
- Effect is the outcome of a chain of events (cause and effect)

Some Odd Spelling Rules

What to do with 'e'

There are exceptions to all the rules about 'e' – including the classic "'i' before 'e', except after 'c'" (e.g. weird, science, etc.). There are a few useful general tips, however:

Dropping the 'e'

Words ending in 'e' often lose the 'e' when a suffix (the ending which is added to a word) begins with a vowel or when a 'y' is added. For example:

desire + able = desirable

criticise + ing = criticising

advise + ory = advisory

educate + ion = education

arrive + al = arrival

close + ure = closure

noise + y = noisy

Keeping the 'e'