

# TLC Grammar Handout

To improve the grammar in your writing

## Avoid mistakes

When reading, analyzing, discussing, and writing:

Think in English, or think in pictures.

Do not translate into your first language. Do not mix English and your first language.

Explain ideas in readings with simple SVX grammar (subject + verb + something).

Use simple vocabulary. Avoid dictionaries. Do not use many special words from readings.

## Use SVX grammar

SVX = subject + verb + something. Subjects, as much as possible = people (women, they, he, children, etc.). Verbs – simple present or past tense. Simple SVX grammar is clear. It is possible to explain complicated ideas with simple grammar.

Combine some SVXs. But avoid very long sentences. Use *and*, *but*, *so*, *because*, *when*, *even though*, *if*, *after*, *before*. Examples: Men talk more in public and women talk more at home. Women talk to make connections, but men talk to increase status.

## Find mistakes

Read your paper aloud, or have someone read it to you. Your ears can hear mistakes that your eyes miss. Read it backwards (read the last sentence in a paragraph, then the next to last sentence, etc.). You will read slower and can focus on each sentence.

If it is not SVX, try to change it to SVX. Mistakes may become clearer.

Check for consistency, one thing at a time. Check all verbs (same tense). Then check all adjectives, prepositions, subjects. Look for parallels. SVX, but SVX because SVX, so SVX.

Check logic. Look for *so*, *because*, *even though*, *but*, *if*. Try changing *so* and *because* (I took a taxi because I was late. I was late, so I took a taxi). Check if some logic steps are missing. Beware of grammatical but not logical sentences (Today is Friday, so this is a pen).

Find parts where you used your first language, used dictionaries, used special words from readings, didn't understand well.

## Work with tutors

First avoid mistakes, use SVX grammar, and find mistakes. Then, ask a tutor about specific sentences. Because of Temple University policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, tutors cannot check all of your grammar. But they can help you find your most common grammar mistakes in body ¶ 2 – and then you can check the rest of your paper for the same kinds of mistakes. Most common mistakes include translating, verbs, subject-verb agreement, adjectives, prepositions, logic.

## Online help

**OWL at Purdue** see *Proofreading* (list on left), see also *General Writing – Grammar*  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/>

**St. Martin's Handbook 6e** see *the top twenty*, click on listed items  
<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/smhandbook6e/Player/index.aspx>

**TU Writing Center** > *Support for Writers* > *Handouts & Style Guides*