MOST COMMON ISSUES IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH

These are some of the issues I've seen most often in the years of working with native speakers of Russian on writing and speaking in academic English. Some of them are because of the differences between the Russian and English languages. But they are not necessarily unique to native speakers of Russian, because (for example) there are other languages that don't have the definite/indefinite articles "the" and "a". Also, some of these are issues for native speakers of English too, because it is academic English, not the everyday spoken language (which is called colloquial language).

So this is not intended to be a list of "mistakes"! Its purpose is that if you can be aware of these things as possible issues and know where to go for further information, then you can address them in your writing and speaking. You will be as clear, natural, and precise as possible to educated native and nonnative speakers of English and really distinguish your work.

As in the Principles and Characteristics document, each item is referenced to places in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), 7th edition, and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS), 16th edition; and in Adrian Wallwork's *English for Writing Research Papers* (Springer, 2016, 2nd ed.) ("Wallwork 1") and *English for Research: Grammar*, *Usage and Style* (Springer, 2013) ("Wallwork 2"). All of these contain more information on, and examples of, the points discussed. Although it is not referenced here, and the points are generally the same, if you are choosing to or required to do your work in British English you should consult *New Oxford Style Manual* (Oxford, 2012) for any differences in spelling, punctuation, and other matters.

Before you begin this, it's helpful to take a look at some of the issues of **word order in English**, because the need to use a word order that is natural in English will determine everything else that you may need to do in the sentence. Most issues involve not putting the most important actor at the beginning of the sentence, in general, followed by the verb. Many sentences read almost exactly in the opposite direction. For example:
One of the most sensitive to criticism aspects of qualitative research is subjectivity. =
Subjectivity is one of the aspects of qualitative research that is most sensitive to criticism. (correct)
"This is a breakthrough," said at the opening session the director of the laboratory Professor Ivantsov. = "This is a breakthrough," said Professor Ivantsov, the director of the laboratory, at the opening session. (correct)
Wallwork 1, Chapter 2, "Structuring a Sentence: Word Order", and Chapter 4, "Breaking Up Long Sentences", are very useful guides.

Finally, please remember (as I like to put it) to "never say never!" That is, there are very few absolute, across-the-board, hard-and-fast rules, and this material is not a list of absolute rules! For almost anything that could be said, there are probably exceptions or differences in some contexts. English tends to be flexible and context-driven. Also, the use of certain words and expressions in academic English may depend on the field—physicists and philosophers "talk" differently! These are overall guidelines that apply in most cases.

1. Word choices for academia. Academic writing, and to some extent speaking, involves not using colloquial words that may be fine in other contexts. Below, the colloquial version of each pair is in italics; the preferred academic choice is on the right. The choice will still depend on the context and construction in which you are using the word, so there may be other possibilities.

a lot, lots of/ many
really/ very, truly
little/ small (about size; "little" might be used in other constructions)
big/ large (about size; "big" might be used in other constructions)
maybe/ perhaps, possibly
famous/ well-known, renowned, famed
as, since/ because
due to (due to the fact that)/ because
so/ thus, therefore, because (or delete)
for instance/ for example (for instance is sometimes acceptable but not to overuse)
besides/ in addition, additionally
till/ until
after that/ then
kind of, sort of/ type of
everybody, nobody, and others/ everyone, no one
start/ begin, begin to occur, initiate
is supposed to/ will, is intended to
nowadays/ currently, at present, today (nowadays can be acceptable but not to overuse)
got/ received, obtained, was gotten (but "got" is used more in British English)
make/ create, develop, construct
works/ operates, exists, is open (and others depending on context)
gain traction/ increase in influence, popularity, or other (it's jargon)
get acquainted with/ meet, visit, get to know, learn about
have a grip on/ be able to
make clear/ clarify
make/get bigger/ increase, expand, enlarge
have to/ must, be required to (especially in the present tense)
going to/ will, *used to be*/ was
set up/ establish, create, initiate (try out, work out, lay out, figure out–see below)
go back/ return, *go out*/leave, exit (*way out*/exit, as a noun)
carry out, do/ perform, conduct
take place/ occur
take part/ participate
put off/ delay
deal with/ address (or others depending on context)

We are going to put off carrying out the survey. = We will delay conducting the survey.

Note that the first five words on this list are not likely to be used in writing an article for publication, because they are not precise scientifically; however they may come up (that is, appear!) in other forms of writing and speaking. Some of the colloquial words might be chosen in other forms of academic communication, for example in speaking at a conference workshop, but should be chosen carefully.

The last eight items are examples of the **phrasal verbs** discussed in Principles and Characteristics, page 5. There are hundreds of others. It is an interesting phenomenon of a double vocabulary in English. In most academic writing and speaking, the more formal, one-word verb is used; the challenge is determining the most precise one.

Note that nowadays some words may be considered too formal even in writing: for example, "hereinafter" and "therewith" will not normally be used (but "hereafter" might be). "Shall" is generally used only for some meanings, and almost never as a substitute for "will" (see section 9).
APA p. 116 Colloquial Expressions, Wallwork 2 p. 138

2. Verb choice. Many verbs are close but not quite the same in meaning and in how they are used. An example of this that often comes up is to say—to tell—to talk—to speak.

to say: She **said**…**(something)**(to someone) [needs what was said; not *She said to him*, but "She said hello to him," and "She said hello."]

to tell: They **told (someone)** (something) [usually needs object of the person who was talked to; not *They told, "We are here"* but They told him, "We are here."]

to talk: He talked (somehow)(to someone) [does not need any object: "He talked."]

to speak: same as to talk. It does not refer to what someone said or to whom, just the physical act of speech: "He spoke slowly." It's less colloquial in writing.

Note the prepositions that go with each of these: "Say", "talk" and "speak" all use the preposition "to" if the action is towards another person/object: "They said to us", "they spoke to us", "they talked to us". But it's "They told us." [not *They told to us*.]
And, "about" is used with "tell", "talk", and "[speak" but not "say": "She told us about…" "She talked about…" "She spoke about…" [but not *She said about…*]

Example: He told the researchers that the data was not complete. He said to them that because the data was not complete, they would talk about it at the next meeting.
Example: My father, the late Premier Khrushchev, told President Kennedy that they ought to end the crisis. He said that it would not be difficult to do.

See APA p. 117–119, CMOS p. 229 section 5.96 on transitive/intransitive verbs (there are many verbs that must have an object and others that do not, some that can be either way).

Choosing exactly the best verb from among those with similar meanings to clearly express your meaning is an essential part of writing, and everything else is much less difficult to do once you have established a precise "verb vocabulary" for your work.

3. Agreement of subject and verb. The longer and more complex a sentence is, the more difficult it may be to identify the subject of the sentence and ensure that it agrees in number with the verb. It is important to look at each sentence and each phrase within the sentence after writing it, determine the subject, and make sure the verb agrees with it.

Example: The goal of the research, whose components **were** developed earlier, **was** to determine the chemical composition of this substance.

Example: Historical research, which may **involve** conducting interviews, visiting archives, and searching electronic databases, often **becomes** costly.

Note that for many or most verbs in English, only the 3rd-person singular form of a verb changes (I do, you do, he-she-it do**es**, we do, you do, they do). It makes a big difference to remember this when using a noun that needs a 3rd-person singular verb, or using other nouns that do not need that form of the verb: not *He do* or *He don't, They does or They doesn't*, but "He does", "He doesn't", and "They do", "They don't".

Examples: The impact of the research projects does reach beyond the region. The research projects do influence developments beyond the region.

Note that in these two examples, "do" is not strictly necessary; it could be said that the impact reaches beyond the region and the projects influence developments. "Do" is used for emphasis of the idea. But in some cases, including many questions, "do" is needed as a helping verb: not *Where they get inspiration?* but "Where do they get inspiration?" (it could also be, "Where are they getting inspiration?", and in singular would be "Where does she get inspiration?"). Be sure to check the word order of any questions that you write (after determining whether it is a question or only a statement of someone else's question).
APA p. 119, CMOS p. 238 section 5.131

4. Use of "to be" verbs in the present tense. In English, "is" or "are" is used instead of a dash.

Example: The departments involved are Philosophy, Sociology, and Political Science.
(not, *The departments involved—Philosophy, Sociology, and Political Science.)*
Example: The population of the region in 1905 was 11,000.
(not, *The population of the region in 1905 — 11,000, and in 1910 — 15,000.)*

Also, "is" and "are" are fine words to use in English, and often preferable to the words that are used in Russian to fill in for them ("happens", "consists", "becomes", and many others).

5. Tenses of verbs. One major issue is the difference between the simple present tense (which makes general statements) and the present progressive tense (which talks about something taking place in the present). Also, the present perfect tense is used for actions or conditions that began in the past and continue in the present.

Example: Currently, University scientists **are trying to** determine the cause of… (not, *Currently, University scientists try to determine the cause of…*)
Example: When the University needs funds, it **applies** [simple] for grants. The University **is** currently **applying** [progressive] for grants for three new laboratories. The University **has applied** [present perfect] for many grants for laboratories in the last two years.
Example: The conference **takes place** annually in Barcelona. It **will take place** next month. It **has taken place** for many years.

These considerations also apply to the past and future tenses. And, using the past tense makes a statement more specific than using the simple present; the simple present tends to make a general statement.

Example: "Our results showed that children **learn** rapidly at age 1" is general, about all children, but "Our results showed that [the] children **learned** rapidly at age 1" refers to the subjects of the study. Most journals prefer research results in the past tense, for that reason.

APA pp. 117–118, Recommended Verb Tenses, CMOS p. 235–237 sections 5.116–5.128, and the detailed material on verbs in Wallwork 2 Chapter 8.

6. Contractions. As noted in Principles and Characteristics page 6, contractions are normally not used, especially in writing—it is "are not" instead of "aren't", "do not" instead of "don't". In some situations in speech they may be used to make the tone a little less formal and more personal, for example in a conference workshop presentation; this can also be the case in some letters and emails, especially to colleagues. In some fields, such as philosophy, contractions are used for that reason in some written work, when scholars are "talking" to each other and don't wish to sound too impersonal (but do not ever do it unless the journal allows or requires it). In any case, awkward (*I'd've, should've, that'd*) or ambiguous (*there's*)(*it's*) contractions are avoided, and ones that are not possible or correct (*mayn't*). Note that if there is a contraction in a direct quote from someone else that you are using, you should not change it.
Also, note the difference between "it's"="it is" and "its"=possessive, "a book and its cover" and that "you're" ("you are") is not the same as "your" (belonging to you, "your book")(many native speakers do not know these nowadays!).

APA p. 116, CMOS 5.103 p. 232, Wallwork 2 p. 138

7. "And" and "as well as" (and commas). In English, there is almost always the word "and" before the last in a series of things: "apples, oranges, bananas**, and** kiwi". There is sometimes a term within the series that includes "and": "the Departments of Biology, Geology **and** Geography**, and** Chemistry, as well as Physics".

As in the sentence above, the phrase "as well as" is not the same as "and", and it does not make the verb plural if used with one other item: "The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses **increases** [not increase] with practice."

In many styles, a comma is used before "and" or "or" in a series: "the height, width**, or** depth"; "the study by Smith, Jones**, and** Adams" (APA p. 155). This tends to be clearer, especially when there are other "ands" earlier in the sentence—it is a clear signal that the next thing is the last item in the series. Called the Oxford or serial comma, it is recommended by CMOS as well, but is not always used in British writing. It is recommended, and in either case it is very important to be consistent, one way or the other but not both in one document.

Note that it is always very tempting to have series of terms and then add on to it using "as well": "We sampled apples, oranges, bananas, and kiwi, as well as the other fruits collected

and the ones that were preserved were analyzed…" In most cases, using "as well as" to add on more than a few words results in making the sentence just too long, and it is better to begin a new sentence with the next idea.

Example: This scientific forum promotes fundamental research in nanosystems and materials and environmental management, as well as chemical and analytical control and monitoring of the substances, materials, and environmental objects. (not, *This scientific forum promotes fundamental research in nanosystems and materials, environmental management, as well as chemical and analytical control and monitoring of the substances, materials and environmental objects.*)

8. Biased language. As discussed in Principle and Characteristics p. 3, **it is unacceptable and inaccurate to speak of all people as if they were males**: *mankind, the life of a man, the participants were 19 men, everyone and his…, a person…he…,* and many others are not ever to be used. Besides causing problems with your work being accepted, this (for example in a conference talk) makes a person appear behind the times, outdated.

CMOS section 5.225 "Nine techniques for achieving gender neutrality" is extremely useful in finding ways to avoid or solve this problem!
Example: The programmer should update the records when data is transferred by the main office (not, *The programmer should update the records when data is transferred to him by the main office*). [omit the pronoun]
Example: Contestants must conduct themselves with dignity at all times (not, *A contestant must conduct himself with dignity at all times*). [use the plural]
Example: Every resident of Tomsk is a person with a bright future (not, *Every resident of Tomsk is a man with a bright future*).

It is now acceptable and preferred to use "they", "them", "their" for a generic person. (APA p. 140). The best source on this is the APA blog, "Welcome, singular they" (October 31, 2019) https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they

Each student submitted their art portfolio to the committee.
not
Each student submitted his or her art portfolio to the committee.

Gendered occupational titles are to be avoided: *chairman, foreman, housewife, mailman, salesmanship, stewardess, waitress*
Preferred: chairperson or chair, supervisor or superintendent, postal worker or letter carrier, homemaker, selling ability (instead of salesmanship), flight attendant, server

Again, "**Differences should be mentioned only when relevant.** Gender, marital status, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, or the fact that a person has a disability should not be mentioned gratuitously" (i.e., unless there is a specific reason related to the topic) (APA p. 132). CMOS 5.221–5.230 has further helpful details. When differences are relevant, it is important to describe them with the appropriate level of specificity: "65–80

years old" (not "elderly"), "below the federal poverty level for a family of 4" (not "poor"). See APA Chapter 5, Bias-Free Language Guidelines, and https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf and study the relevant part closely if you will be writing or speaking about a particular group of people (or people in general).

A word that is used often here is **"foreign"**. In English, this word usually has a more specific connotation, and is often negative (as well as not always being precise). Whenever possible, use "international", "from abroad", "from countries other than X", "from non-CIS countries" (if that's the case), and other phrases—if it is needed at all.

Phrases such as "the British researchers", "the Israeli scientists", "the Chinese guests", "the Indian professors" should not be used. Nowadays it is not clear what these adjectives refer to—is it their birth, their citizenship, their race or ethnicity, where they are living or working, or the country or university that is sponsoring their research? So these are not precise terms, and using them as adjectives appears to identify people by their ethnicity, which is not relevant in most contexts and appears biased. If their location is important, it would be (for example) "the researchers from Sussex University", "the scientists in the project sponsored by Israel", "the guests from China", "the professors from India", and so on. This is an example of the principle of "people first" ("people with disabilities", not *disabled people*).

9. Words to use with care.

etc. It tends to make the author sound tired or unsure of the information—and it's never used after a person's name. Try the sentence without it. Readers know you are naming the most important things, not necessarily everything. If it's really necessary, it's better to use "and others" or to be clear, "and other [somethings]", "among many others", or something else depending on the context.
CMOS p. 280 section 5.220

et al., i.e., e.g. Latin abbreviations are to be used sparingly, and always with a comma afterward. In most cases, less common Latin terms are not used unless they are used in the specific field. Latin abbreviations are to be used only in parenthetical comments (except for et al. in the references); if the comment is not in parentheses, the words must be used (i.e. = that is, e.g. = for example, and others).
APA p. 176, CMOS 10.43
Example: …all of the experiments (i.e., the ones that tested phytochemicals)…
or, …all of the experiments, that is, the ones that tested phytochemicals…

vs., incl., and others. Using abbreviations in sentences in the text is to be avoided—if you use the term, use the whole word (versus, including).

A major reason for the above points is to avoid having a period (.) in the middle of a sentence, which interrupts the eye in reading and may be confusing.

fulfillment, realization, formation, attraction, implementation These usually have a more specific meaning in English, and the ideas are usually expressed by a verb: "We achieved our goal," "The idea became a reality," "The program was created…", "The program attracted quite a few students from Southeast Asian countries", "The goals were met", "They performed the strategic tasks."

One of the biggest benefits of not using these words, and using verbs instead, is using fewer words: instead of *The formation of a system of…*, it could be "Creating a system of…". This will also save some "ofs" that will be needed to make possessives (see Prepositions, below)!

Also, these and other nouns can't be used to build a noun string: not *modern dynamic society formation*—it would be "forming a modern, dynamic society" (see Wallwork 1 p. 30).

should Note that "should" tends to be a command or other imperative in English, and in most usages it is more polite to use "would" or "could" (see Wallwork 2 pp. 85–93), while still being careful because "would" can be a command in some contexts, such as asking someone to do something. Also, "should" is not used as often in a general way in English: instead of "*A classical university should have many faculties*", it would be something like "Classical universities have many faculties."
shall "*Shall* may be used instead of *will*, but in American English it typically appears only in first-person questions involving choice ("Shall we go?") and in legal commands ("The debtor shall pay within 30 days.") (CMOS p. 645) It does not automatically make you sound better.

10. Writing or speaking about time. It's not the English version of the Russian prepositions.

till nowadays/ up to the present, until now
Since 1963 until 1970…/ From 1963 to 1970,
Until 1988 to the present time…/ From 1988 until now, … Since 1988 [and ongoing]…

Unlike in Russian, the word "year" is not used, it's just "in 1988", not *in 1988 year*.

Dates: January 20, 2014, (American style) (see APA p. 155) (British is 20 January 2014 with no commas) (CMOS 6.45). In numerals, it's 1/20/14 American style, 20/1/14 European style (and it's best to find a way to be clear with a date like April 6, 4/6 or 6/4).
In dates, the number of the day is just the numeral, it's just "23 December 1986," not usually *23rd December 1986*.
It is popular but not correct to make the number of the day ordinal—it's January 20, not *January 20th*.
Centuries: It's the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the end of the 20th century, the beginning of the 21st century, from the 1900s onward.
But "the 2000s" does not refer only to the decade 2000–2010, it could mean until 2099, so it's necessary to be more precise, depending on which years you are referring to.
Centuries are not written in Roman numerals, in most contexts it's "the twenty-first century" or "the 21st century", not *the XXI century.*

11. Prepositions. Because English lacks any (!) case inflections (except for I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, who/whom), many more prepositions are needed in English to connect the meaning of two words, and many errors of English involve leaving out a needed preposition. Knowing collocations of verbs and nouns with prepositions is vital, and making certain that the pairs are used correctly in sentences.
See CMOS section 5.191 and Wallwork 2, pp. 115–130 for useful lists

And, there are key common prepositions whose collocations are important to know, for example: of, in/at/into.
Example: professor **of** psychology **at** Boston University, **in** the Psychology Department
Example: The model is capable **of** self-learning, by taking **in** the stimuli from light.
Example: Research on/in/into [something], not *of* [something]
Example: X influences Y, not X influences *on* Y, but X has an influence on Y.

12. Possessives. Because of the way the genitive case is used in Russian, there are English versions of phrases that are somewhat technically correct but not actually correct, because they would usually have to be expressed with a preposition in English:
the book's color/the color of the book
but: Olga's dissertation
and: the University's staff/the staff of the University

See Wallwork 2 pp. 11–17: the possessive is mostly used with human subjects ("Olga's"), and some others, including animals, some of which there are no rules for; most inanimate subjects are "of the…" ("the title of the article"). Words such as "university" and "community" that refer to a group of people can be either way.

It's also possible to say "University staff" because in that case, University is an adjective, not a noun (and it could still be, The university's staff, because the university is associated with people.) In English, because of no case inflections, it is difficult to tell the difference between words that are a noun (university, "attended the university") and an adjective ("the university bookstore"), but it is an important difference because often you can use the word as an adjective and therefore **not need the possessive at all**: "The University staff is aware of the situation…" "The research goal was to establish…" "The museum exhibits were…"

A note related to possessives: many people use phrases such as "of the university", "of the research", "of the department" and so on when it is not actually necessary. If you are talking exclusively about the specific university (or research, department, or whatever), it is superfluous to add "of the university" to so many sentences—we should know by now that this is what you are talking about. Always check to see if these phrases are really necessary to be clear or just a habit that adds words and distracts from the focus.

Comments: Handling possessives correctly is in my opinion one of the three most important things that people can do to sound more natural in English! The other two, in speaking, probably are using countable/uncountable nouns correctly (see section 13) and using say/talk/tell/speak correctly (see section 2). In writing, there are two additional things:

Past participles. In English, the participles usually come after the noun: *the analyzed materials* = the materials analyzed, *the documented sources* = the sources documented, *the researched phenomenon* = the phenomenon that was researched, *the used methods* = the methods used, *the described materials* = the materials described, *the observed reactions* = the reactions observed. Note that in some cases, it's necessary or more clear to use "that": "the phenomenon that was researched", "the materials that were described", "the methods that were necessary" (it's difficult to explain but will depend in part on the whole sentence). Wallwork 2 p. 168

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Noun strings: Because English does not have inflections, and the same word may appear as different parts of speech, people who speak other languages often put together a series of words that would be clear in their language but is not possible in English. Some of these are "noun strings". Wallwork 1 p. 30, Wallwork 2 p. 156–157:
mass destruction weapons= weapons of mass destruction
silicon wafer mechanical strength measurement = measuring the mechanical strength of silicon wafers
interactive social design construction model = an interactive model for constructing social design
This is also true (and important) for the titles of articles and documents. It may seem undesirable because of needing to use "of" in many cases—however, there are other ways to avoid "of" that will make up for this! (See section 12 above.) As Wallwork says (1, p. 30), it's very useful to Google Scholar the phrase that you want to use and carefully analyze the results to make sure whether and how educated speakers of English are using it—this should be an instinctive habit!

13. Mass nouns and count nouns. In English, there are words that exist only in the singular form, and not in the plural, because they represent something that exists as an entity but not as individual items. (These may be different in other languages/cultures.)

Example**: Research is being conducted, not ever *Many researches were conducted.*** It's necessary to say, Research studies were conducted, or use another noun after research (which becomes an adjective) that fits the context ("research projects"). When referring to multiple items of research, still use "research": "Research performed by 10 different laboratories."

Other words that cannot be used as being countable include:
advice (can't say *advices*, need to say pieces of advice, or advice)
feedback (can't say *feedbacks*, need to say comments or another term, or change the sentence so that feedback is correct)
work (is usually used as a mass noun in English, you can't say *works* unless it refers to works of art, musical works, and a few other specific things)
knowledge
guidance
news, weather, traffic, spinach, water, equipment, software, money, expertise, and advertising are other examples of mass (uncountable) nouns because they represent things that are not readily divided and counted. You can refer to many of them, but not by making the word plural.

Wallwork 1 p. 114, APA p. 119, CMOS section 5.8 (including verbs with mass nouns), and especially Wallwork 2 pp. 8–10

Note that countable nouns use the word "many" (many projects) and "fewer" (fewer countries), and uncountable nouns use "much" (much research) and "less" (less water). (See Wallwork 1, Chapter 6.)

14. "A" and "the". These are probably the single most difficult issue for everyone, for obvious reasons; and a really important one. Which one to use (or neither) often depends on knowing the topic being discussed, so a native speaker of English may not know without knowing your topic and intended meaning, and they are crucial to understanding.

The good news is that knowing about the uncountable (mass) nouns and countable (count) nouns makes using "the" less difficult to determine:
If something is a mass noun, not countable, then you cannot use "a" (it's never *a feedback, an information, a news,* etc.)—it will always be either nothing, if you are speaking about the thing in general (feedback is a good thing, information can be difficult to get, news is always welcome) or "the" if you are speaking of a certain specified thing that we already know what it is (the feedback that he gave me, the information we received, the news on television).

So you can ask yourself first whether a noun is countable or uncountable, and not think about "a" if it is uncountable. It will just be "guidance" or "the guidance", for example. If it is countable, then you think about whether it is "the" thing, in the sense of being the only thing, or whether it is still one of others possible, or whether it is general: "The researcher went to the laboratory…", "She is a researcher in this laboratory…", "Researchers often work in laboratories…"

Example: The University will distribute information about ABC. **The** information will…
Example: The University is establishing **a** laboratory to research XYZ. **The** laboratory will… [first, the laboratory is introduced, then it is known]
Example (a title): "A Method of Synthesizing Ammonia" [it's not the only possible method]
Example (the article): "The method described will synthesize…"

See Wallwork 1 pp. 203–205, Wallwork 2 Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (Chapter 5 is on when neither "a" or "the" is needed), and also CMOS 5.220 on use of "a" versus "an". Another book by Wallwork, *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises* (Springer, 2013) has some exercises that some people have found helpful.

15. People's names and titles. In English, people are usually not named with their surnames and first initial(s): it's usually not N. Karpov, A. L. Popova, and C. Jones (or Karpov N., Popova A. L., or Jones C.) It's usually the surname only, or else the first name and surname, or the surname with a title, depending on the context. And, titles and first names are usually given first, not the surname: It is rarely Karpov N. or Karpov Nikolai, but rather Nikolai Karpov, Professor Nikolai Karpov, Karpov (or Dr., Professor, Mr. Karpov). In research articles, other authors and researchers are often mentioned for the first time with

their first name and surname, and then referred to by their surname only (but it important to check the style of a specific journal).

Therefore, for letters and other communications, it is especially important to be able to know or find the full first name and/or title of a person to whom you wish to communicate. Not all positions will be used as titles, for example, you would not likely say *Dear Registrar Smith* (but you might say "Dear Registrar" in some contexts). Mrs. is rarely used, and Mr. or Ms. should be avoided if at all possible (because women's marital status and people's gender should not normally be relevant, and these are not used much in email anyway).
Another Wallwork book, *English for Academic Correspondence and Socializing* (Springer, 2011) has a detailed and very useful section on all aspects of writing email letters, including the question of addressing people.

When you communicate with people from other countries, it's important to make clear by the way you use them what your first name and surname are, especially if they could both seem like surnames to non-Russians. If you put your surname first, it will be understood correctly if followed by a comma: Ivanov, Stepan (or Stepan Ivanov, but not *Ivanov Stepan*).

Unfortunately in some ways, people in most other countries are not familiar with patronymic names, so you don't have the option of referring to people by all three names or by the first name and patronymic. In regard to your own name, some Russians choose to use their patronymic as a middle initial (Nikolai M. Karpov, for Nikolai Mikhailovich Karpov), but others prefer not to abbreviate their patronymic and use their first name and surname only (Nikolai Karpov).

Finally, using your name in English involves some choices about how you will spell it—there are often choices based on how it can be transliterated and how you prefer it. It's probably best to make a choice and then *be consistent everywhere* about how you do it, so there will be no confusion about who *you* are! If you check on something like Scopus and find that there are already others with your first name and surname, you will need to have a middle initial. This is also true for personal email used for international work.

16. Precision. It's important to think twice about what you specifically mean and avoid jargon and constructed compounds that don't have precise meaning.

Example: *sources of research* really is sources of data (or research data).
Example: *modern* – just what do you mean, when exactly did the "modern" era begin? does everyone agree? (it also tends to make you sound a little outdated if used often). Usually, "contemporary" or "current" is better, if used to refer to things at the present time; if something else is meant, it's better to use a few more words to be clear about the time period you are referring to.
Example: *leading* – according to exactly what or whom?
Example: *gaining traction* – jargon for something that should be specified: gaining influence, being taken more seriously, increasing in use, or something else
Example: *value-regulatory standards* – check to see whether a compound word that you want to use is actually used to denote the meaning that you intend or does not have a specific

meaning in English usage (searching Google can be a help here, if the results are examined carefully)

Note that being precise includes **not using synonyms to vary your terms** to "not be boring". In the part of your writing that describes the scientific content, it's essential that the same term be used consistently for the same thing, so that there is no question of what is meant. For example, if you are calling the people whom you studied in your experiment "the subjects", then always refer to them that way; if you also refer to them as "the participants", "the volunteers", "the respondents", and "the sample", "the future university students", and other terms, readers cannot be sure that you are talking about the same thing.

17. Russian academic style and related. These are some of the polite words and phrases that are often used because of Russian academic style, but are not usually used in writing in academic English. Mostly, they can and should be omitted completely and the idea or the facts presented directly, using a verb.

experts, esteemed, well-known, scientists, authorities, leading, world's leading, famous
(These express a judgment that is not presented directly, even though they are positive.)
Sometimes the term "acclaimed" is used to indicate that someone's work was widely recognized.
[Someone] rightly said…
(This is a judgment without evidence presented, especially at the beginning of an article.)
It is well known that…It is obvious that…Obviously…
(These are the same, and also may seem to talk down to readers who don't happen to know the thing or see it the same way. If it's really obvious, it will be shown in what you write.)
We can say…
It is worth mentioning…
Let us consider that…
I just mean to suggest that…
Then there is the problem of…
It's necessary to note that…
It is known that…
In terms of X, …
Speaking about the [something] of the [something], it…
(You just talk about the thing itself—start the sentence with the idea that would have been at the end of these phrases, and then say something about it. If necessary, use simply "Note that…")…
On the one hand…and on the other hand (too many words, and usually not necessary if talking about two things, or by using a phrase such as "in contrast," or "in addition,")
The key factors for the implementation of this task are the development of…
The specific mechanism of resolving these problems [unnamed] is associated with the strengthening of the development of the concept of…in the framework of…
(These can usually be much shorter—focus on the actual meaning and where the statement is leading: "X, Y, and Z are key to creating the…", "X is the means of developing…")
(Wallwork 1 p. 88–89 and elsewhere)
and commonly used unnecessary phrases:

in the process of
in conditions of
in the development of
with the help of
in order to
from the point of view of
in terms of
in the course of
in (the) case of
(and others)

18. Similar words, in English. These include:
marked/remarked
formed/performed
researches/researchers
prospective/perspective
in/into/within (these are not quite the same meaning: 90% of the time it's "in", and 10% within = inside, into = motion into something)
institute/institution
excellence/excellency
estimate/evaluate
consider as/consider [to be]
cooperation/collaboration
relation/relationship
sample/example
articulation/exarticulation
correspond, respond
usage/use
present/represent
concept/conception
frame/framework
Islamic/Islamist
exemplar, exemplary/example
humanities, humanistic/humanitarian
if/whether
widely spread [do not use] /widespread
competences [not a word]/competence, competency, competencies
lection [not a word]/lecture
methodics [not a word]/methodology, methodological
technics [not a word]/techniques, technical, technology
organizators [not a word]/organizers
in the nearest future [no]/in the near future, soon
bases on [no*]*/based on (see below)

A special note on nouns versus verbs:

The verb and noun versions of the same word do not necessarily mean the same or have the same use. For example, "attract" can be used to say that the University wants to attract international students, the laboratory wants to attract funds, the film attracted a large audience, and so on. But, "attraction" usually refers to physical attraction, either romantic interest between two people or the attraction of magnets to each other. So to say that the University wants to be involved in the attraction of international students has quite a different meaning! There are other noun–verb pairs like this and it's important to check before assuming that the noun version means the same.

A special note about forms of the word "base":
base= a noun that means a location: a military base, a base of operations
base= a verb that must have a direct object that means a fairly direct connection: they base their position on earlier evidence, the movie was based on [participle] the novel of the same name
bases=the plural of the noun (military bases) and the 3rd-person singular of the verb:
He bases his research on a certain theory.
basis=foundation: Rates are determined on the basis of this data. The plural is "bases" but it is rarely used: the legislative bases are complicated.
It is not correct to say that something *bases on* something else—rather, something is based on something else, or has something else as its basis, fairly directly.

Example: The laboratory has its base in the Biology Department, but also operates field stations.
Example: This report is based on the evidence that was presented earlier.
Example: The basis of our opinion is the research that was performed.

not : *based on this information, we decided to stay* [you are based!]
rates are adjusted every year, based on this document [it's not like an adverb]
on a personal basis [should be, personally]
CMOS 5.220

19. Russian words that have several somewhat different meanings or connotations in English. These include:
территория/ territory, area (this is usually used with a more limited meaning in English)
актуально/ timely, current, relevant, pressing (and others) (but "actual" in English means just that something is real, it exists)
аккуратно/accurate (accurate means correct, precise, but not neat or careful)
перспективный/does not mean perspective in English, it means "promising" or "prospective"
решить/ decide, resolve, solve
задача/ problem, matter, issue (a problem tends to connote being problematic, and is solved)
особенности/ characteristics, special features, (sometimes) particularities (it's often translated as peculiarities in English, but **peculiar in English usually denotes odd**!)
рамка/framework (it's usually more specific in English, something occurs in the framework of a specific formal agreement or treaty)
CMOS 5.220

20. Too abstract. It's essential to say more directly what you mean or are referring to.

negative regularities
manifesting negative tendencies
Those practices face the challenge of self-modification…
These phrases are completely unclear.

21. Terms not used internationally. Your terminology may not be used in English, and you should never assume it is no matter how familiar it seems to you. It's crucial to check on this in various ways (including Google Scholar, carefully, but also in publications in your field) and make sure that you're using internationally understandable terms or defining yours when they are used. This doesn't mean that you can't use these terms, especially if it is a concept that doesn't have another term for the same thing in English, but when you use one for the first time, it should be clearly defined.
a complex of…. a motivational field… value-regulatory standards… communicative space (and many more)
If you encounter a concept that does not have an equivalent at all in English—for example, the name of a particular type of Russian poetry that does not exist elsewhere else—the Russian word can be transliterated and used, in italics, with your explanation of what it is. (This is similar to how "banya" and "perestroika" have become words in English.)
The bottom line is that you need to know what does and doesn't exist in English for the same thing, and then be clear about the meaning of an English phrase that comes from Russian.

Something else that is not done internationally is expressing increases or decreases in something as numbers, for example, *increased by 3 times, became 2.5 times less*—use percentages.

Also, one time = once, two times = twice, three times = three times (and the same after that) (in older English, three times = thrice, but not used now).

22. Just wrong. Some common usages are just not correct, for example *the most of, the most part of.* Instead it should be:
Most of the people were interested in visiting the exhibit of rare books.
Most people were interested in visiting the exhibit of rare books.
The majority of the books were published before 1925.
The largest part of the exhibit is located on the second floor, so the most books are found there. [more than on the other floors]
or, Most of the exhibit is located on the second floor, so most of the books are found there.)[no "the" before "most"]
Note: "majority" tends to refer to countable items ("the majority of the books"), and "large" tends to refer to area, size, or a high number of something ("a large library", "a large part", "a large number of people", "a large number of books").

Another such usage is *allows to* ("allows to determine…")–if you use it, it needs to be "allows determining...". Better yet, "enables determining"—in English, "allows" implies permission.

It's not correct to use many words to try to state something instead of knowing the one word that represents the meaning:
The figures are made in full accordance with the growth of the participants of the group.
= The figures are lifesize.
(This was describing a certain group of statues.)

23. Anthropomorphic phrases, such as *The theory has not yet found its reflection in practice…*
These phrases come from how reflexive verbs are done in Russian, but in English this sounds like the theory is being spoken of as a living creature capable of finding something. Instead, it could be:
"The theory has not yet been reflected in practice." There are many more of these (*questions finding answers*, and others).
The principle is not to attribute human characteristics to animals or to inanimate sources.
This comes up in scientific writing:
The theory addresses… (correct) (or indicates, presents)
The theory concludes… (incorrect)
The results suggest… The data provide… The study found… (all correct)
Pairs of rats (cage mates), not *rat couples*
APA p. 117

24. Specific reference, continuity.
It vs. this, these (and as a blank word)
It means that… should be, This/ this characteristic means that…
In English, "it" is very general, because it lacks case and gender, so using it makes it very difficult to be clear in reference. But "this" and "these" can be a good link to the idea that has gone before, as long as the reference is clear. (Instead of "it means that…" you can use "these characteristics mean that" about some things that were just named in the previous sentence.) Wallwork 1 p. 88

Also, avoid beginning sentences with "It is…" In English, the subject and verb are at the beginning of sentences and are very important, so this is a waste of these positions. See Wallwork 1 p. 88:
It is possible to do this with the new system. = This can be done with the new system.
(or, even better, The new system makes this possible.)
It is mandatory to use the new version. = The new version must be used.

25. Restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses: that and which. In US English especially, "Relative pronouns (who, whom, that, which) and subordinate conjunctions (e.g., since, while, although) introduce an element that is subordinate to the main clause of the sentence and reflect the relationship of the subordinate element to the main clause. Therefore, select these pronouns and conjunctions with care; interchanging them may reduce the precision of your meaning." (APA p. 122–123)

That (*who* for people) clauses (called restrictive) are essential to the meaning of a sentence.
Which (who for people*)* clauses (called nonrestrictive) can merely add further information.

My sister, who lives in Paris, is an anthropologist.
My sister who lives in Paris is an anthropologist. (Wallwork p. 91)
(In the first sentence, the speaker has only one sister; in the second, the speaker may have more than one sister but this one lives in Paris.)

The cards that worked well in the first experiment were not useful in the second experiment. [Only those cards that worked well in the first experiment were not useful in the second.]
vs. The cards, which worked well in the first experiment, were not useful in the second. [The second experiment was not appropriate for the cards, all of them.]
(APA p. 83, 6th ed.)

APA p. 122 and CMOS section 5.221 (which notes that this may be different in British English, not as much distinction is made), and Wallwork 1 pp. 108–110, Wallwork 2 pp. 43–48

Scientists were called on to produce research that resulted in…[results of research]
vs. Scientists were called on to produce research, which resulted in…[something else]
Note that "that" does not use commas before or after the phrase, and "which" does always have a comma before and after the phrase. This makes a critical difference in how the sentence is understood (see the first example above). It's not like который! so be careful not to use commas with "that".

26. British vs. American spelling, punctuation and idioms.

Words that often used that are different are: center/centre, program/programme, behavior/behaviour, analog/analogue, labeling/labelling, judgment/judgement
In punctuation, a major difference is that British English uses single quotation marks ('x') and American uses double ("x").
There are some different expressions and idioms that may come up: the British "wagging school" (American is skipping school, and dogs wag their tails) or "grassing someone up" (American is reporting someone, and cows eat a lot of grass). It's important to be aware of what is an idiom and write or speak in a way that would be understood (or not misunderstood) by an international audience unless the idiom is something clearly utilized widely in your field.

With spelling (and some punctuation, like quotation marks), it's important to determine what is required by the journal or other entity, or if there is no requirement, decide for yourself—then in either case **be consistent throughout the document**. Many journals now stipulate that the author may choose British or American, as long as it is consistent. Other journals want one or the other, but those that are British may say that -iza words are acceptable (i.e., civilization instead of civilisation and many others).

Use Word's Spelling tool with the **UK** dictionary if you need to use British spellings, but be aware that it doesn't show them all (it will accept z or s in "-ation" words such as the above).

Wallwork 2 pp. 231–233 contains some useful tables of British and US spellings. The *Oxford Manual* contains a helpful section and dictionary.

Note again that "got" is used more in British English, and tends to sound odd in American; it's more likely to be "have", "receive", or in some cases, "have gotten."

27. Punctuation.

Commas: In English, many words do not require a comma before them (who, what, that, and some uses of which)(it's not like который). Not using a comma and placing one correctly when it is needed are essential to meaning.

Example: The person who was walking down the street that is next to Lenina was someone whom I know who goes to TPU.

Examples:

After completing the project**,** the scientists began presenting their results.

When the specimen is dry**,** remove it from the recipient. (Wallwork 2 p. 209)

Surprisingly**,** the results were not in agreement. (Wallwork 2 p. 209)

(In the three sentences above, what comes before the main subject and verb of the sentence is an introductory phrase that needs a comma to set it off.)

The results were unexpected**,** and they did not agree with earlier ones.

(This could be two complete sentences, so if done this way need a comma before "and".)

APA p. 155

After thinking about it, it became obvious that… (This is not possible—if there is a participle [thinking], what follows the phrase must be the performer of the action: After thinking about, we felt it was obvious that…)(This is the same as above with the scientists completing the project—what follows the comma must be the performer of the action of the participle, it's not *After completing the project, the results were presented by the scientists*.)

See APA, p. 123–24, Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Commas are usually used in **numbers** over 999 (1,000 and higher); and they are not used in decimal numbers, it's 99.9%, not 99,9%).

Quotation marks: English usually does **not** use quotation marks around titles, and in general uses them much less than they are used in Russian writing, mainly for directly quoting someone. For a special, "coined" word, they are used the first time and not afterward for the coined word (just as in this sentence).

Both kinds of quotation marks are not used in the same piece of writing unless it's a quote within a quote—it's either ' ' (British) or " " (American), with the opposite for a quote within another quote (see the next example).

(see APA pp. 157–159)

Parentheses: There is only one kind of parentheses: ( ). Brackets [ ] are mostly used for parentheses within parentheses.

Example:

"…(the items that 'formerly' [in the last century] were restored)".

APA p. 159–160

Dashes and hyphens: It's important to note the difference between minus signs, hyphens, en dashes and em dashes, and be consistent in using them: - -- – —

In mathematics, a minus sign must be used, - .
See APA p. 157 and CMOS section 6.82 (and Oxford has a useful section)

Note: Speaking of hyphens, APA pp. 163–164 and CMOS Chapter 7.77–7.85 have very useful guides to **whether and when to use hyphens in compound words**: throw away, throw-away, throwaway; multi-disciplinary, multidisciplinary; health care, health-care, healthcare…and hundreds more. Oxford also has a section on this. It's essential to do this correctly and consistently. Clue: It depends in part on whether the resulting compound is a noun or adjective.

Note: Extra spaces are not usually used around punctuation: for example, it's either/or, not either / or. Dashes do not have a space on both sides in most styles. This may vary in journals in the physical sciences, according to the guidelines for using symbols.

28. Capitalization. In standard written English, all proper nouns are capitalized, and all major words in titles and headings.
Titles of things have all the major words capitalized and no quotation marks.
Example: *"Programme for increasing the international competitiveness of Russian universities"* is Programme for Increasing the International Competitiveness of Russian Universities. (After that, it will be "the Programme" [capitalized] if referred to that way, not "the programme".)
Example: Professor Marina Smirnova of the Laboratory of Social Science Research, author of the article "Research Methods in Social Psychology"
It's essential to be clear about what the exact title of something is, because it will be shown by all the major words being capitalized (and if you don't know, others, including anyone editing your work, may not know).
APA pp. 165–169, Wallwork 2 pp. 201–205

29. Italics. Italics are used for a number of purposes, but are not usually used to emphasize a word or phrase—this should be done by syntax, that is how you construct the sentence. Otherwise the readers eventually don't know what is really important or not. Sometimes a key term may be placed in italics when it is defined, and certain other things are italicized (for example, book titles).
APA pp.170–171

30. Being systematic. **<u>Always</u>** use the Spelling tool of your word processing program, and get this feature if you don't have it. There are many words that are not caught by it ("their" and "there" will both be correct) but it is an easy and mandatory way for your work to be professional quality. **A spelling error not detectable by the Spell tool is considered understandable, but one that would be found by it is considered unacceptable and weakens your credibility, because you did not use a basic tool.**
This is part of another major priority—**consistency**. For example, if you use the Oxford comma, then always use it; if you spell something a certain way that has two alternate spellings, then always spell it that way in the document; if you use a hyphen in a word, always use it (depending on the style and the position in the sentence). Follow the rules of the style (for example, if the journal specifies APA) on whether numbers are spelled out or use

the numeral; if there are no rules for your document, follow APA or some other style to be consistent. All of this will make the document far more professional and authoritative.

Also (this happens so often that it should be mentioned), **always use a subject line in your email**, even if it is something very simple ("document", "question", "request")—otherwise it may be filtered into the recipient's junk mail; and the recipient will not know the purpose of your email or the expected response.

No matter what else, know how the spoken and written language and style are being used in your field!!!! And it's crucial not to think that anything that is in print or on the internet is correct only because it is there—you are a scholar, make sure you have scholarly sources, such as CMOS and APA, and Oxford, and master what is key for your field and topic. You don't need to know everything, but you need to know what it is that you need to know and where to find it.

And, focus on VOCABULARY!! Always continuing to build your vocabulary of verbs, especially, along with their their collocations, is crucial is being able to express your work in the most clear, precise, and meaningful way. Using your resources to carefully determine the very best verbs and nouns for your article or other item, before you write it, is key to your success and will make the rest of your work easier.

When you do so, be very careful about **"dictionary words."** People often decide that they need a word for something, look in an English dictionary or other online source, and find something that seems to fit perfectly. But there is still the matter of usage. For example, although to eulogize someone does mean to praise his or her accomplishments very highly, it is used almost exclusively for speaking about a person after he or she has died—so you do not want to say that you are eulogizing successful graduates to promote your program. Always choose words that you are sure of from previous use and very careful research. In addition, not all words are equal—it may be technically not incorrect to say "nonstop fetal monitoring," but the phrase that is used *in that field* is "continuous fetal monitoring," and using it makes the difference in your appearing to know about your topic internationally (and possibly, in the research you have been able to do, using key words).

Three more notes:

Asking questions can be very effective in writing, including in titles—"How do children learn to read? A review of recent research". Or in text, "Therefore our research question was, What are the effects of ocean warming on rivers?".
But for historical reasons, English has a unique way to ask questions that involves changing the word order and often using the helping verb "do", along with question words who, what, where, when, or why. It is never enough to put a question mark after a normal sentence, as many languages do. It is very worthwhile to learn how to ask questions, and use them and check them. Also, talking about a question is not a question and should not have a question mark: "We discussed how to mix the chemicals and the reagents and whether to heat them."

Redundancy must be avoided—whenever you write something, do an extra check afterward for unneeded, repetitive words and phrases.
In their research, the scientist aims to study thoroughly the condition of coral reefs. =
The scientist researches (or, will research) coral reefs.
14 words vs. 5 words! Because research IS studying thoroughly, you don't need to say it twice!

Plagiarism is as we know a hot topic. It most frequently comes up when it's necessary to accurately summarize and analyze the findings of previous researchers in a way that is fair to them but not too close to their words. The current 7th edition of APA has not only a discussion of this (pp. 254–256) but also some guidelines on paraphrases and quotations (pp. 269–278).