

POCKET STUDY SKILLS

Julia Copus

**BRILLIANT
WRITING
TIPS FOR
STUDENTS**

B L O O M S B U R Y

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TIPS FOR
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POCKET STUDY SKILLS

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BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published 2009 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Reprinted by Bloomsbury Academic, 2022 (twice)

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-0-2302-2002-7
ePDF: 978-1-1370-1399-6

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Acknowledgements

My thanks to Kate Williams for her encouragement and helpful comments, and to Andrew Stevenson for his love and support, as well as his judicious eye. I am grateful also to my colleagues for many helpful and thought-provoking discussions – to the English Department at Exeter University and to my fellow Fellows at the Royal Literary Fund, who help students with their writing in universities across the country. A big thanks too to the students from many different disciplines who came to visit me at Exeter for advice on their writing, whose challenging queries taught me to think in new ways about how writing skills should be communicated, and who have kindly allowed me to use extracts from their essays.

Finally, I would like to thank Sallie Godwin, whose delightful illustrations not only enhance the look of this book, but add so much to the explanations it contains.

Introduction

Clear writing is inextricably linked to clear thinking: the very process of trying to put complex ideas into the plainest possible words helps to clarify those ideas and generally sharpen up your powers of reasoning. It follows, therefore, that if you make the effort to improve the clarity of your writing, you'll automatically refine your ideas in the process!

The idea for this book came from my work as a writing adviser at Exeter University. I found that my students were confused by the conventional rulebooks I had on my shelves. It was a mixture of sympathy and shared frustration that led me to try out new ways of explaining various points of punctuation, grammar, style and essay structure. More often than not, I turned to visual images. *Think of the apostrophe as an arrow... Imagine the colon as the two curled fists of a speaker, ready to open as they offer an explanation to a statement they've just made.* Encouraged by how helpful the students found these explanations, I started to think about introducing them to a wider readership.

While working on this project, I focused on the fact that most students don't have time to wade through lengthy chapters on how to write the perfect essay. What they really want is solid and succinct guidance on their *most common* writing concerns – and tutors' most common gripes. Here is a book that meets that demand.

Why am I finding it hard to adjust to writing at university level?

First, it's important to realise that *you are not alone!* Students often complain about a big jump in tutors' expectations between school and university. In addition, many students feel under pressure to sound 'academic', and as a result, their writing style often becomes unnecessarily convoluted. This book will guide you, step by step, towards a clearer writing style.

What makes this guide different?

Simplicity: What you won't find here is pages of unnecessarily complicated rules and exceptions to rules. For instance, Chapter 5 introduces you to a simple rule for using the possessive apostrophe. Learn this one piece of advice, and you'll know all you'll ever need to know about the possessive apostrophe. That's because it's a rule that works in all instances – for singulars, plurals, compound words, nouns ending in 's', and all other types of words.



Easily memorable tips based on visual descriptions: There is a visual aspect to many of the tips in this book and, for that reason, many of them are accompanied by

illustrations. It's often this visual aspect that makes the advice stick, since most people find it easier to remember pictures than they do ideas.

Up-to-date examples from student writing: Where appropriate, the writing tips are accompanied by common errors and problem sentences collected from students' own writing. These are followed by simple, step-by-step guidance on how to put things right, and suggested rewrites.

Additional help at the editing stage: No matter how good the advice is, nobody is going to express themselves perfectly first time round. At the end of each chapter, therefore, you will find a proofreading section, aimed at helping you polish up your essay after you've finished writing.

At a glance: There is also a handy 'at a glance' section at the end of the book, which includes a checklist of tips on how to improve your writing style, and a list of useful phrases for essay writing.

Pocket-size: Finally, as you'll have noticed, this book is small enough to carry with you at all times, in a pocket or bag, so that you can dip into it as and when you need. I trust it will prove a sturdy and dependable friend – during your years at university, and well beyond!

Julia Copus

Please note that, throughout the book, awkward or incorrect sentences are indicated by a cross, and problem-free sentences by a tick.

For Debs
with love and admiration