# Bite sized grammar by Helena Beeson [Video Transcript]

Re-recorded by Anna Shirley

This video will introduce you to four aspects of grammar which are vital to get right at university level when writing assignments. They are split infinitives, apostrophes, sentence structure and paragraphs. Split infinitives are used in spoken English, but for academic writing they are frowned upon so try to avoid them.

An infinitive is made up of two words; usually the word ‘to’ and a verb or a doing word. For example, ‘to go’. These words should stay together when used, but if you split the infinitive then an adverb, or a word describing the verb, would go between them. For example, ‘to boldly go’. To make the sentence correct in written English the adverb should go after the verb so ‘to go boldly’.

Moving on to apostrophes, use these to show possession or the removal of a letter. For example, Jane’s cake. The cake belongs to Jane. Or don’t instead of do not. Note that shortened forms aren’t acceptable in academic writing. For multiple items you do not need an apostrophe.

For sentences you should be able to say a sentence in one breath so check this first. It should stand alone as one complete idea with a subject, verb and object. So, someone or something interacting with someone or something. The example here is Jane eats cake.

Finally, paragraphs. Paragraphs make written work manageable for the writer and the reader as the use of them avoids long blocks of unstructured text on the page. Aim for about 5-7 sentences per paragraph which should cover one specific area. Planning different components for your assignment in advance will help you to identify what your paragraphs will cover. For each paragraph, consider the following structure: Point, start with making the key point. Provide evidence to back this up by referencing the idea. Evaluate, interpret the evidence, judge the quality and weight of it, present alternate viewpoints and limitations to the evidence, and link to your next paragraph.

Remember, you will lose marks for submitting work with poor grammar. No one gets a written assignment right with the first draft so re-read your work multiple times before you hand it in. Read it out aloud and ask someone else to look through it who is not an expert in the area to see if it makes sense. If you are interested in finding out more about academic writing please see the related videos.

Need any more help?

Come to a Drop-In on campus or online, every Weekday 12-1pm, Book a Tutorial with someone on the learning development team, or email us at the addresses shown here:

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Thank you.