

Writing Handbook

Longman Exams Coach

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Advantages and disadvantages

1 writing about advantages

advantage noun [countable] a good feature that something has, which makes it better, more useful etc than other things:

- The great advantage of digital cameras is that there is no film to process.
- The advantage of using a specialist firm is that the people who work there have years of experience.
- One of the big advantages of this type of engine is that it is smaller and lighter than a conventional petrol engine.
- The university has the advantage of being one of the oldest and best respected in the country.
- The movement of the sea is predictable. This gives wave power a distinct advantage over (=an obvious advantage compared to) wind power.
- Despite a few problems with the design, the car's advantages clearly outweigh its disadvantages. (=the problems are not enough to stop it being a good car)

Benefit noun [countable] a feature of something that has a good effect on people's lives:

- Regular exercise has many benefits, including reducing the risk of heart disease.
- Modern technology has brought great benefits to mankind.
- There has been a great deal of research into the potential benefits of using genetically modified crops.

Merit noun [countable] a good feature that something has, which you consider when you are deciding whether it is the best choice:

- The committee will consider the merits of the proposals.
- In her book, she discusses the relative merits of the two political systems. (=she compares the features that they have)
- The merits and demerits of (=the good and bad features of) alternative funding systems were widely discussed in the newspapers.
- The chairman saw no great merit in this suggestion. (=he did not think that it was a good idea)

good point noun [countable] a good feature that something has:

- One of the good points about the car is that it is easy to drive.
- Each system has its good and bad points.

plus point noun [countable] a good feature that something has:

- The small but powerful battery is another of the camera's many plus points.
- The estate agent's leaflet said a major plus point was the recently modernized kitchen.

the good/great/best thing about used when mentioning a good feature of something:

- The great thing about living in a city is that you can go shopping at almost any hour of the day or night.
- Her wicked sense of humour was the best thing about her.
- The good thing about cycling is that you don't have to worry about getting stuck in a traffic jam.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

the good/great/best thing about is rather informal. Don't use it in formal essays.

the beauty of something is that used when you want to emphasize that something has a very good or useful feature:

- The beauty of the design is that it is so simple.

2 writing about disadvantages

disadvantage noun [countable] a bad feature that something has, which makes it less good, less useful etc than other things:

- The main disadvantage of this book is its price.
- These vaccines have two serious disadvantages. Firstly, they are not 100% effective, and secondly, they are expensive to make.
- A major disadvantage of using large quantities of chemicals is that they quickly get absorbed into soil.

drawback noun [countable] a disadvantage which makes you think that something is not so good, even though it has other advantages:

- The major drawback of this method is that it can be very time-consuming.
- Aluminium is very light and also very strong. Its main drawback is that it cools down very rapidly.
- Summer in the Scottish islands can be beautiful. The only drawback is the weather, which can be very changeable.

downside noun [singular] the disadvantage of a situation that in most other ways seems good or enjoyable:

- The downside of running your own business is that you are responsible if anything goes wrong.
- Everyone wants to be rich and famous, but it does have its downside.
- Most comfort eaters enjoy what they eat, but the downside is that they soon start to put on weight.

bad point noun [countable] a bad feature that something has:

- There are good points and bad points about single sex schools.
 - For all its bad points, and there are many, it is still the best software system of its kind available.
- 1 to agree with someone or something.

Agree and disagree

1 To agree with some thing

agree verb [intransitive and transitive] to have the same opinion as someone, or to think that a statement is correct:

- Many people agreed with his views about the war.
- I completely agree with Chomsky when he says that humans are born with a special ability to learn language.
- Most experts agree that dieting needs to be accompanied by regular exercise.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Don't say 'agree someone's opinion' or 'agree to someone's opinion'. Say agree with someone's opinion.

share somebody's view/concern/fear etc to have the same opinion, concern, fear etc as someone else:

- I share her concerns about the lack of women in high academic positions.
- A lot of people share his view that tourism will have a negative impact on the island.
- This fear was shared by union leaders, who saw the new law as an attack on their rights.

subscribe to a view/theory etc to agree with an opinion or idea:

- There are a number of scientists who subscribe to the view that there is a God who controls the workings of the universe.
- Some people think that there are cases where torture is justified. I, for one, do not subscribe to this theory.

be of the same opinion if people are of the same opinion, they agree with each other:

- All three specialists were of the same opinion about the cause of her illness.
- Professor Dawkins is of the same opinion as Dr Jones.

concur verb [intransitive and transitive] a formal word meaning to agree:

- The committee concurred with this view.
- Most modern historians would readily concur that (=agree without any hesitation) this was an event of huge importance.
- As most biblical scholars concur, the letter could not have been written by any contemporary of Jesus.

somebody is right/somebody makes a valid point used when you agree with what someone says:

- Darwin was right when he argued that humans and higher mammals are closely related.
- Cox makes a valid point when he questions our ability to remain objective.

2 to partly agree with someone or something

agree up to a point to partly agree with someone or something:

- Although I agree with him up to a point, I find it hard to believe that this is true in every case.

broadly agree to agree with most parts of something:

- The conference delegates broadly agreed with the proposals.

there is some truth in used when saying that you think that something is partly true or right:

- There is some truth in the argument that there is a link between violence on our streets and violence on our TV screens.

- There is some truth in all of these theories, but none of them can fully explain the causes of unemployment.

3 when a group of people agree

agreement noun [uncountable] if there is agreement on something, people agree about it:

- Today there is general agreement that pollution from cars and planes is threatening the future of our planet.
- There is widespread agreement on the need for prison reform. (=most people agree about it)
- Geologists are mostly in agreement about how the islands were formed. (=most of them agree about it)
- The two sides were unable to reach agreement. (=they could not agree with each other)

consensus noun [singular,uncountable] agreement between most of the people in a group about something, especially with the result that they decide on a particular course of action:

- There is now a general consensus among scientists on the causes of global warming.
- There was a growing consensus that the military government had to be replaced.

common ground noun [singular, uncountable] things that people agree about, especially when there are other things that they disagree about:

- There are many areas of common ground between the two philosophers.
- Despite their differing backgrounds, they found common ground in their interest in science.

unanimous adjective if a group of people are unanimous on something, they all have the same opinion about it:

- Medical experts are unanimous on this issue.
- They were unanimous in their opposition to the plan.
- a unanimous decision by the three judges

widely held view/belief etc an opinion, belief etc that many people have:

- There is a widely held view among business experts that selling off a business to a management team is not in the best interests of the company's shareholders.
- There is a widely held belief that advanced western societies are becoming more and more criminalized.

widely/generally accepted if something is widely or generally accepted, it is thought to be true by most people:

- It is now widely accepted that the universe began with the so-called 'big bang'.
- It is generally accepted that electricity generated from nuclear power is more expensive than other forms of electricity.

Aim or purpose

1 ways of saying what the aim or purpose of something is

aim to do something to try to achieve something:

- This paper aims to show how science and technology have influenced the work of artists.
- The research aims to answer two questions. First, what causes the disease? Second, is it possible to find a cure?
- In this study, we aimed to record the number of birds who returned to the same woodland for a second summer.

set out to do something to try to achieve something. You use set out to do something especially when talking about someone's original aims when they start to do something:

- The organization never achieved what it set out to do.
- The first chapter sets out to explain the origins of modern science.
- The authors set out to show how men's and women's language are different from each other.

in order to so that someone can do something, or so that something can happen:

- Tests were carried out in order to find out if the drug had any side effects.

be intended to do something if something is intended to do something, it is done for that purpose:

- The course is intended to provide a basic introduction to molecular biology.
- The dams were intended to control the flooding which affects the river in winter.

be supposed to do something/be meant to do something to be intended to have a particular result or effect. You use these phrases especially when something actually fails to achieve what was originally planned:

- The film is supposed to be a serious drama.
- The scheme was meant to improve the city's image.

2 words meaning aim or purpose

aim noun [countable] what you want to achieve when you do something:

- The main aims of the project are as follows.
- The main aim of the study is to investigate the way in which young people deal with the stress of exams.
- The bank achieved its aim of attracting 50,000 customers by the end of the year.
- One of the aims of this chapter is to explain Freud's theory of the mind.
- My aim in this article is to examine ways in which the present system could be improved.
- A cure for cancer is our ultimate aim. (=the most important aim, which you hope one day to achieve)

purpose noun [countable] the reason why you do something, and the thing that you want to achieve when you do it:

- He did not tell them about the purpose of his visit.
- The main purpose of education is to help people to lead satisfying and productive lives.
- The main purpose of the changes is to reduce costs and improve the service to customers.
- The United Nations was established for the purpose of protecting basic human rights.
- The information will be used for research purposes.
- Many plants from the rainforest are used for medical purposes.

objective noun [countable] the thing that someone is trying to achieve, especially in business or politics:

- The policy has three main objectives: firstly, to increase food production; secondly, to improve the distribution of food; and finally, to improve the diet of ordinary people.
- The principal objective of any company is to make money for its shareholders.
- The government is unlikely to achieve its long-term objective of cutting CO2 emissions.

goal noun [countable] something that a person or organization hopes to achieve in the future, even though this may take a long time:

- It took Mandela over forty years to achieve his goal of a democratic South Africa.
- The company's long-term goal is to be the market leader in this type of technology.
- World leaders have set themselves the goal of getting rid of child poverty.

target noun [countable] the exact result, often a number or an amount of something, that a person or organization intends to achieve:

- The University is expected to reach its target of 5000 students next September. (=achieve its target)
- They failed to meet their target of having a computer in every classroom.
- He set himself the target of raising over \$1 million for cancer research.

intention noun [uncountable and countable] something that you intend to do:

- Their intention was to sail on February 10th, but bad weather made this impossible.
- She went to Hollywood with the intention of starting a career in movies. (=that was the reason she went there)
- Rafsanjani said that Iran had no intention of developing nuclear weapons. (=they definitely did not intend to do this)
- The reader can never be 100% sure of the writer's original intentions.
- It was never their intention to encourage people to break the law.
- It is not my intention here to give a detailed account of all the events that led up to the war.

mission noun [countable] something that a person or organization hopes to achieve, which they consider to be very important and forms the basis of their activities:

- The agency's mission is to provide medical and psychological help to victims of the war.
- Our mission is to educate people about the disease.
- The students are on a mission to record and preserve the history of their area. (=they are trying hard to do something, because they feel it is very important)

the point noun [singular] the purpose of doing something and the reason why it is right or necessary:

- The point of the experiment is to show how different metals react with oxygen.
- People sometimes find it difficult to see the point of studying subjects such as Latin at school. (=they find it difficult to understand why it is necessary)
- He felt that his critics were completely missing the point. (=they failed to understand the most important purpose or reason for something)

ends noun [plural] the result that someone is trying to achieve, when this is bad or dishonest:

- Several politicians were accused of trying to exploit the situation for their own ends. (=use it in order to get advantages for themselves)
- The terrorists will do almost anything to achieve their ends.

Approximate/ Exact

1 words meaning approximately

approximately adverb used when saying that a number or amount is not exact, and it may be a little more or a little less:

- Approximately 30% of adults who have the disease will die from it.
- The last earthquake of this size occurred approximately 60 years ago.
- In 1994, the U.S. Government paid farmers approximately \$10 billion in grants.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Approximately is more formal than about, and is usually used in more technical contexts.

about adverb used when saying that a number or amount is not exact, and it may be a little more or a little less:

- They arrived at about 10 o'clock in the evening.
- It takes about 2 hours from London to Leeds on the train.
- There were about 50 people at the meeting.

roughly adverb approximately - used especially when you are trying to give someone a general idea of the size, number, or amount of something:

- The two countries are roughly the same size.
- Roughly half of all Italy's gas is imported.
- The amount of caffeine in one can of cola is roughly equivalent to four cups of coffee. (=it contains about the same amount)

(somewhere/something) in the region of approximately. Used with very large numbers or amounts:

- A new stadium would cost somewhere in the region of \$100 million.
- The painting is worth something in the region of £15,000.

circa preposition used before a year, usually one that is long time ago, to say that something happened near that time, but perhaps not exactly in that year:

- The house dates from circa 1600.
- The picture shows a building under construction, circa 1848.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Circa is originally a Latin word, meaning 'about'.

The written abbreviation of circa is c or c., and this is often used instead of the full form: He was born c 1830.

- Heston, who died c. 1357, was a noted academic.

or more

10 years/20%/100 kilos etc or more used when the total may be a lot more, and you want to emphasize that this is a large amount:

- It can take 6 months or more to get a visa.
- Olson weighed 250 pounds or more.

2 words meaning exactly

exactly adverb no more and no less than a particular number, amount, or time:

- They finished at exactly 6pm.

- Every patient received exactly the same amount of the drug.
- Exactly 60 years ago, two scientists at the University of Birmingham demonstrated the first device that used microwaves.

to be exact used when you are giving a more exact figure or amount. To be exact is used at the end of the sentence:

- The rocks there are very old: more than 3 billion years old, to be exact.

precisely adverb a word meaning exactly, used when you want to emphasize what you are saying:

- The meeting began on time, at precisely eight o'clock.
- He always left his office at 2 o'clock precisely.
- No one knows precisely how many people were killed or injured.

right adverb

right in the middle of/next to/in front of etc used when you are emphasizing that something is in a particular position:

- The arrow was right in the middle of the target.
- The two explosions happened right next to each other.

directly adverb

directly in front of/behind/under etc exactly in a particular position:

- It was a small house, directly behind the church.
- You need to sit directly in front of the screen.
- A statue stood directly below the stained-glass window.

Causes

1 to cause something to happen

make verb [transitive] to make something happen, or make someone do something:

- Plants need light and heat to make them grow.
- He was good at making people laugh.
- The government's economic policies made it unpopular with voters.
- Inventions such as the washing machine have made people's lives a lot easier.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Don't say 'make somebody/something to do something'. For example don't say 'What makes young people to commit crime?' Say: What makes young people commit crime?

cause verb [transitive] to make something happen, or make someone do something:

- Smoking causes cancer.
- The lack of rain is causing problems for farmers.
- The crisis caused oil prices to go up dramatically.
- At first, the news caused people to panic.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Cause is often used about bad things, for example: High fat diets can cause heart disease.

Cause is also often used in scientific and technical descriptions, when saying that something has a particular effect, for example: The heat causes the ink and powder to mix together, and an image is formed.

Cause is more formal than make

lead to verb [intransitive] to start a process that later makes something happen:

- The research could eventually lead to a cure for many serious illnesses.
- Over-fishing has led to a collapse in the numbers of tuna and cod in the Atlantic.
- Cutting spending budgets will inevitably lead to poorer quality public services.

result in phrasal verb to make something happen, especially something bad:

- Many household fires result in death or serious injury.
- Low levels of vitamin D can result in a softening of the bones.
- The trial resulted in Oscar Wilde being sent to prison for 2 years.

create verb [transitive] to make a condition, situation, problem, or feeling start to exist:

- In the novel, McEwan creates an atmosphere of menace.
- Science and technology often create more problems than they solve.
- The coach's job is to create the conditions for success.

bring about phrasal verb to make something happen, especially a change or an improved situation:

- The war brought about enormous social change.
- So far, all attempts to bring about peace have failed.

give rise to a formal phrase, used when an event, action etc makes a feeling or problem start to exist:

- Poor performance in exams can give rise to depression and even thoughts of suicide.
- The announcement gave rise to violent protest in the east of the country.
- Drinking unfiltered water can give rise to health problems.

generate verb [transitive] to make a feeling start to exist and grow among a large group of people, for example interest, support, or a demand for something:

- The trial generated a lot of interest in the media.
- Japan's economic success generated a huge demand for luxury goods.

be responsible for to be the person or thing that makes something happen:

- The human rights panel concluded that the military was responsible for killings, torture and other abuses.
- These particles are responsible for making new protein molecules.

set off phrasal verb to cause something to suddenly happen, especially fighting, protests, or debates involving a lot of people:

- The killing of Martin Luther King set off a wave of rioting across the USA.
- The programme set off a national debate about children's school meals.

trigger verb [transitive] to make something suddenly start to happen, especially a bad situation such as a crisis or a war, or a medical condition:

- The First World War was triggered by a series of events, beginning with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.
- Certain foods can trigger allergies.
- If oil prices keep rising, this could trigger an economic crisis.

2 ways of saying that something is caused by another thing

be caused by:

- Many illnesses are caused by stress.
- Almost half of all accidents are caused by speeding. (=driving too fast)

be the result of/result from to happen because of something else that happened or was done:

- He said the success of his company was the result of hard work by all the staff.
- Greenhouse gases are the direct result of pollution from cars and factories.
- Meningitis results from an inflammation around the brain.
- These conditions result from a combination of economic and social factors.

arise from verb [intransitive] if a problem or a serious situation arises from something, it starts to happen because of it:

- A number of problems arose from the break-up of the former Soviet Union.
- People are now much more aware of the dangers arising from asbestos dust.

stem from phrasal verb if something stems from another thing, it develops from it and there is a direct link with it, even though this link is not always immediately obvious:

- His emotional problems stemmed from an unhappy childhood.
- The present difficulties stem from the recession and the collapse of the housing market.

3 to be one of the things that cause something to happen

play a part if something plays a part, it is one of several things that causes something to happen:

- No one knows exactly what causes the disease. Genetic factors are thought to play a part.
- The rioting in the capital played a major part in the collapse of the government.

be a factor to be one of several things that affect something:

- Public pressure against nuclear power was definitely a factor in their decision.
- The parent's influence is a major factor in a child's progress at school. (=a very important factor)

contribute to verb [intransitive] if something contributes to a situation, it is one of the things that cause that situation to happen or become worse, but it is not one of the main causes:

- Methane gas is known to contribute to the greenhouse effect.
- Television often gets blamed for contributing to the decline of family life.
- Passive smoking could contribute to the development of respiratory diseases among nonsmokers.
- It is acknowledged that unhappiness is a contributing factor in the development of certain illnesses.

influence verb [transitive] if something influences another thing, it has an effect on it, although it does not cause it directly:

- Weber demonstrated that culture and religion influenced economic development.
- Genetic factors may influence how the central nervous system reacts to nicotine.

4 something that causes another thing to happen

cause noun [countable]:

- Scientists are still trying to find the cause of the disease.
- Investigators have visited the scene to establish the cause of the accident. (=find out what the cause is)
- Polluted water is one of the major causes of death among young children in some countries.
- Almost certainly, the underlying cause of the war was the need for oil. (=the most important cause, even though it is not immediately obvious)
- Scarman was in no doubt that the root cause of the rioting was unemployment and poor living conditions. (=the most important cause, even though it is not immediately obvious)

factor noun [countable] one of several causes of a situation or condition:

- The research tried to identify the key factors (=most important factors) affecting economic change.
- The committee studied a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors.
- Studies have shown that alcohol is a contributory factor in 10% of all accidents in Britain (=it is one of the things that causes accidents, often in combination with other things)
- Cost is often the deciding factor when choosing any product. (=the main factor that makes you choose to do something)

origins noun [plural] the first causes from which a situation, condition etc has developed:

- The book describes the origins of modern science.
- The origins of Sudan's debt crisis go back to the early 1970s.
- For some patients, understanding the origins of their fears is a long and painful process.
- The dispute between the two families had its origins in the battle of Wakefield.

source noun [countable] something that causes something else to develop, for example a disagreement, a feeling, or an infection:

- Housework can become a major source of conflict between couples.

- The fact that the two words are so similar can be a source of confusion.
- Further study was necessary to identify the source of the infection.

root noun [countable] the original and most important cause of something, especially a problem:

- They failed to get to the root of the problem. (=discover the main cause)
- Bad experiences in childhood lie at the root of many psychological disorders. (=they are the main cause)

Certainty and Uncertainty

1 ways of saying that you are certain about something

certain adjective if you are certain about something, you are absolutely sure that it is true. If a fact is certain, it is definitely true, or it will definitely happen:

- I am certain that his analysis is correct.
- It now seems certain that the earth's climate is starting to change.
- One can never be absolutely certain of anything in science.
- The general addressed the troops before the battle, assuring them that victory was certain.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Certain is more formal than sure. It also sounds more definite.

sure adjective [not before noun] if you are sure about something, you believe that it is definitely true or correct:

- I am sure that many other writers share this view.
- It is difficult to be absolutely sure about when the photograph was taken.

convinced adjective [not before noun] completely sure that something is true, especially when you cannot prove it but you have strong feelings about it:

- She was convinced that her husband was innocent.
- They became convinced of the need for better health education.

confident adjective [not before noun] sure that something good will happen, or that you will be able to achieve what you want:

- The researchers were confident of success. (=they were sure that they would succeed)
- In his report he said he was confident that standards would improve.

satisfied adjective [not before noun] sure that something is true, because you have enough information to make a decision:

- Professor Knowles is now fully satisfied that (=completely satisfied) the drug is safe for general use.
- The insurance company needed to be satisfied that the damage was caused by the storm.

have no doubt/be in no doubt to be so certain about something that there are no doubts in your mind:

- I have no doubt that a cure for the disease will one day be found.
- He said that he was in no doubt that the fire was started deliberately.

without (a) doubt used when you are completely sure about something:

- She was without doubt one of Mexico's finest artists.
- His experience in London was, without doubt, very important to his career as a writer.
- Without a doubt, it is what we eat that determines our weight.

there is no doubt that (also there is no denying/disputing the fact that) used when you are completely sure about something:

- There is no doubt that violence on our TV screens does influence children.
- There is no denying the fact that these men are guilty of the most horrendous crimes.
- There is no disputing the fact that new technology has had a dramatic effect on our lives.

certainly/undoubtedly adverb used when you want to emphasize that you are certain of what you are saying:

- Businesses will certainly benefit from the new tax laws.
- Undoubtedly there is a link between smoking and lung cancer.
- Certainly it will be a long time before humans are able to live in other parts of the solar system.
- Beckham was the captain and undoubtedly the best known player in the England team.

2 ways of saying that you are not certain about something

not certain/uncertain adjective [not before noun] not sure about something:

- I am not certain that the figures are accurate.
- People often feel uncertain about how to deal with this type of situation.
- It is uncertain whether his death was accidental.
- It is by no means certain that she is right. (=it is not at all certain)

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Not certain/uncertain is more formal than not sure.

not sure/unsure adjective [not before noun] if you are not sure about something, you do not know exactly what it is, whether it is true, what to do etc:

- I am not sure whether this story is true or not.
- Police are still unsure about the precise details of what happened.
- Scientists are not entirely sure that (=not completely sure) life does exist in other parts of the universe.

have doubts if you have doubts about something, you are not sure if it is true, correct, or suitable:

- Many people have doubts about the methods used in the research.
- Doctors have doubts as to whether these alternative treatments really work.

be dubious about something to not feel sure that you should do something, because you can think of ways in which it could cause problems or go wrong:

- The writer is dubious about the effectiveness of prison as a way of dealing with drug-related problems.
- Most medical schools are dubious about accepting students older than 30.

Comparing and Contrasting

1 what you say when comparing things or people

compared to/with used when comparing things or people, especially when comparing numbers or amounts:

- This year's profits are much higher compared to last year's.
- The average male now has a life expectancy of 77.6 years, compared with 75 in 1960.
- Total spending on health care represents about 4 percent of GDP. Compared to most other advanced economies, that figure is low.
- Mortality rates are lower for women as compared with men.

by comparison/in comparison when compared with another thing, person etc:

- Young male drivers have far more accidents by comparison with other groups.
- Wages are low in comparison with the US.
- In his early pictures he used rather dull colours. His later work is much brighter in comparison.
- The amount of money spent on advertising milk pales in comparison to (=is much less than) the money spent on advertising beer.

next to/beside preposition used when comparing things or people, especially when there is a surprising difference between them:

- Our problems seem trivial next to those faced by people in the developing world.
- Their achievements pale beside his. (=they seem much less important)

as against/as opposed to conjunction used when you are comparing two figures or pieces of information, in order to show how they are different:

- The company achieved sales of \$404 million, as against \$310 million in the previous year.
- One study predicted that 42% of female university graduates would remain single the rest of their lives, as opposed to just 5% of male graduates.

unlike preposition used when saying that people or things are different:

- Unlike his brother, he had no interest in music.
- The drug has very few side effects, unlike other drugs that are used to treat this illness.

in contrast/by contrast used when mentioning the difference between two things, people, countries etc that you are comparing:

- In contrast to the south of the island, the north is still untouched by tourism.
- The US and Australia, in contrast with most other leading industrialized nations, chose not to sign the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.
- Studies show that each execution costs \$3.5 million. By contrast it costs about \$600,000 to keep someone in prison for life.

in proportion to/in relation to used when considering the relationship between the amount or size of something compared to another thing:

- People from Sweden pay the highest rates of tax in proportion to their incomes.
- His head is big in proportion to the rest of his body.
- Britain's national debt was greater than that of the US in relation to the size of its economy.

relative adjective used when comparing the amount of something that someone or something has, with others of the same type:

- In his article he compares the relative merits of living in the countryside and living in a big city.

- It is too early to make a judgement about the relative importance of these different factors.
- How do we account for the relative lack of women studying physics at university?

2 to compare things or people

compare verb [transitive] to examine or consider two or more things or people, in order to show how they are similar or different:

- A study by Nottingham University compared the cost of recycling plastic bags with making them from scratch.
- Galileo compared the time it took for different types of object to fall to the ground.
- The graph compares the number of students joining the university to study history and chemistry.

make/draw a comparison to compare two or more things or people and say how they are similar:

- In her article, she makes a comparison between people's lives now and 50 years ago.
- It is possible to draw a comparison between the two poets' work.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Draw a comparison is more formal than make a comparison.

draw an analogy to say that two situations are similar:

- Some people have attempted to draw an analogy between America's invasion of Iraq and the war in Vietnam.

draw a parallel to say that some aspects of two very different things are similar:

- The writer draws a parallel between Henry James's elaborate style of writing and the ingenious patterns and curious details in Minton's paintings.
- Parallels can be drawn between her work and that of Picasso.

liken somebody/something to phrasal verb to say that someone or something is similar to another person or thing:

- Gambling is often likened to drug addiction.
- Critics have likened the play to Arthur Miller's work.

contrast verb [transitive] to compare two things, situations etc, in order to show how they are different from each other:

- In her novel she contrasts the lives of two families in very different circumstances.

make/draw a distinction between to say that you think two things are very different:

- It is important to make a distinction between people's fears about crime and the real situation.
- The author draws a distinction between allowing death to occur, and causing it.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Draw a distinction is more formal than make a distinction.

Concluding

1 what you say when concluding your essay or argument

in conclusion a phrase used at the beginning of the final paragraph of an essay or article, when you want to write about the main things that you have mentioned in it:

- In conclusion, the results of our study suggest that this type of diet is perfectly safe.
- Thus, in conclusion, the population of England remained fairly stable for much of the 15th century.

to summarize/to sum up used when referring to the main things that you have mentioned in it:

- To summarize: there are many reasons why people commit crime.
- To sum up, in 1922 the Soviet government found itself in a situation similar to the one faced by the Tsars.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

You use to summarize and to sum up at the start of the final paragraph of an essay or article. They can be followed either by a colon or a comma.

something can be summarized as follows used when saying what you think the main points about something are:

- The organization's main aim can be summarized as follows: to create opportunities for students to learn a wide range of computer skills.
- The result of the survey can be summarized as follows. Both Japan and Korea show a strong preference for natural gas over oil, coal, and nuclear energy.

the following conclusion(s) may be drawn used when you want to mention something that you think is true because of what has been written earlier in the article or essay:

- The following conclusions may be drawn from these figures. Firstly, the US economy is moving out of recession. Secondly, there are no grounds for concern about its immediate future.
- With regard to defense measures against attack from the air, the following conclusions may be drawn. The best method of defense is a strong air force. The next requirement is a well-organized observation (radar) and warning system.

the main conclusion to be drawn is that used when you want to mention the main point that you think is true because of what has been written earlier in the article or essay:

- The main conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that the best way to help slow readers is to improve their skill at recognizing individual words.

2 saying again what your aims were at the conclusion of an essay

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

When you are writing the concluding paragraph of an essay, report etc, you often begin by saying what you wanted to achieve when you were writing the essay. The following are some phrases you can use.

the purpose/aim of this ... was to ... used at the end of an essay, article, report, etc, when saying what its purpose was and whether you have succeeded, what you have found, etc:

- The aim of this study was to determine whether it is possible to reduce the amount of salt in bread without spoiling its taste.

in this ... I have tried/attempted to ... used at the end of an essay, article, report, etc, when saying what its purpose was and whether you have succeeded, what you have found, etc:

- In this essay, I have tried to set out the main events that led to the start of the First World War.
- In this report, we have attempted to demonstrate that although nuclear power is cleaner than using gas or coal, it is more expensive in the long-term.

Decreasing

1 to decrease

decrease verb [intransitive] to become less in number or amount:

- The average rainfall has decreased by around 30 percent.
- The total number of people who are unemployed has decreased slightly.
- After radiotherapy, the number of tumours decreased significantly.
- The effectiveness of the drug gradually decreases.

go down phrasal verb to decrease:

- The percentage of fat in our diets has gone down.
- As a result of the improvements, complaints from customers went down by more than 70%.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Decrease is more formal than go down.

If you want to say that something 'has decreased', you can say that it is down, for example: Inflation is down to 4%.

decline verb [intransitive] a formal word meaning to decrease. Decline is used about numbers or amounts, and also about the level or standard of something:

- In rural areas, the standard of living continued to decline.
- Salaries have effectively declined by around 4.5%.
- The rate of inflation has declined sharply in the past year. (=quickly and by a large amount)
- Support for the government is steadily declining.
- The city has declined in importance.

fall/drop verb [intransitive] to decrease, especially by a large amount:

- The number of tigers in the wild has fallen to just over 10,000.
- At night, the temperature drops to minus 20 degrees.
- Profits fell from £98.5 million to £76 million.
- In May, the price of coffee dropped by over 20%..

plunge/plummet verb [intransitive] to suddenly decrease very quickly and by a very large amount:

- Gas prices have plunged 31 percent in less than a week.
- Sales of red meat are plummeting.
- Climate change could cause global temperatures to plummet.

halve verb [intransitive] to decrease by a half:

- He expects the number of farms to halve by 2020.
- In 1965, 49% of Canadians smoked. This figure has more than halved.

diminish verb [intransitive] to decrease to a low number, amount, or level. Diminish is used about numbers or amounts. It is also used when saying that a feeling becomes less strong, or that something becomes less important:

- The numbers of fish have diminished over the years.
- The population of the town diminished from 32,000 to 9,000 between 1871 and 1913.
- The pain gradually diminished.
- Although Campbell's influence had diminished, he continued to speak out against the war.

dwindle verb [intransitive] to gradually decrease until there is very little left of something. Dwindle is used about numbers or amounts. It is also used when saying that something becomes less popular, less important etc:

- The birds' numbers have slowly dwindled, until there are now only about 600 left in the world.
- Traffic along the canals dwindled during the 20th century.
- Support for the theory is dwindling.

2 to make something decrease

reduce verb [transitive] to make something smaller in size, number or amount:

- The army was greatly reduced in size.
- The number of serious accidents has been reduced by a quarter.
- Doctors are urging people to reduce the amount of salt in their diet.
- Using new technology will help to reduce costs.
- Washing your hands helps to reduce the risk of infection.
- The ability to communicate cheaply over long distances has reduced the need for workers to commute to offices.

lower verb [transitive] to reduce the amount or level of something:

- It is a basic rule in economics that if you want people to buy more of your products, you lower the price.
- The voting age was lowered to 18.
- They decided to lower interest rates by a quarter of a percent.
- The drug is used to lower blood pressure.
- Some colleges have had to lower their standards.
- To cool, the motor forces air out of the box, so lowering the temperature.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Lower is used especially in more formal contexts, for example when writing about politics, business, or technical matters. Bring down is less formal.

bring down phrasal verb to reduce something such as prices or costs, or reduce the level of something:

- They used cheaper materials in an effort to bring down costs.
- The wage freeze was part of a campaign to bring down inflation.

cut verb [transitive] to reduce something such as prices, costs, time, or money, usually by a large amount:

- Companies are constantly looking for ways to cut their costs.
- Shell is to cut the price of petrol by 18p a gallon from midnight tomorrow.
- The new service will cut the journey time from London to Manchester to just over 2 hours.
- The working week has been cut from 39 hours to 35.

halve verb [transitive] to reduce something by a half:

- Costs were halved.
- The new drugs have halved the number of deaths among AIDS patients.

relieve/ease verb [transitive] to make pain or feelings less unpleasant:

- Doctors are allowed to give drugs to relieve pain, even if they shorten life.
- Accordingly, they hired more telephone representatives to relieve the pressure on employees who handle customer complaints and inquiries.
- Making a joke can help to relieve the tension.

alleviate verb [transitive] a formal word meaning to reduce pain or suffering, or make a problem less serious:

- Gentle regular exercise helps to alleviate the problem.
- Changes in diet can help to alleviate the symptoms of the disease.

3 a decrease

decrease noun [uncountable and countable] used when something happens less than it used to:

- There has been a significant decrease in the number of deaths from lung cancer.
- In August there was a slight decrease in the rate of unemployment.
- Latest figures show an overall 27% decrease in crime in the area since the project began.

reduction noun [uncountable and countable] used when the price, amount, or level of something is made lower:

- A small reduction in costs can mean a large increase in profits.
- There has been a significant reduction in traffic.
- Over the last few years there has been a dramatic reduction in (=surprisingly large) the number of people arrested for drink-driving.

cut noun [countable] used when a government or company reduces the price, amount, or level of something:

- price cuts
- tax cuts
- pay cuts
- The company is planning further job cuts.
- There have been major cuts in government spending on defence.
- The state of California introduced new laws requiring drastic cuts in (=very big cuts) air pollution from automobiles.
- The bank announced a 1 per cent cut in interest rates.

drop/fall noun [countable] used when a number or amount goes down, especially by a large amount:

- The company reported a 35% drop in profits.
- Researchers found that the number of trees had gone down from 506 to 261, a drop of 48 percent.
- Spain has suffered a sharp fall in its birth rate. (=a sudden very large fall)

decline noun [singular, uncountable] a formal word, used when the number, amount, level, or standard of something goes down:

- There has been a gradual decline in the number of homeless people.
- Television is often blamed for the decline in moral standards in our society.
- There has been a slight decline in the level of violence.
- Four years ago, there were 580 people living on the island, but there are now only 337. That is a decline of 42 percent.

4 when something stops decreasing

level off/out phrasal verb to stop decreasing and remain at the same level:

- The population dropped from a peak of 800,000, levelling off in 1999 at 650,000.
- Latest figures suggest inflation will level out at 2.4% after a year at over 3%.

bottom out phrasal verb to reach the lowest point, and stop decreasing any more:

- The decline in car sales finally showed signs of bottoming out in September.
- There is no evidence that the recession has bottomed out yet.

Disagreeing

1 to disagree with someone or with an opinion

disagree/not agree verb [intransitive]:

- Scholars continue to disagree about the meaning behind the poem.
- Although he did not agree with Plato, he was profoundly influenced by him.
- Scientists disagree among themselves on what causes the disease.
- I strongly disagree with his views on immigration. (=I disagree with them very much)

take issue with a formal phrase meaning to strongly disagree with what someone has said:

- I feel that I must take issue with the article's conclusion.
- Some people have taken issue with Conrad's description of the Congo in his novel 'The Heart of Darkness'.

dispute verb [transitive] to say that you think that something is not correct or not true:

- Researchers have disputed her claims.
- No one disputes that the problem exists.

differ verb [intransitive] if people differ about something, they have a range of different opinions about it. If opinions, views, or tastes differ, people have different opinions, views, or tastes:

- Critics differed sharply on the merits of his work. (=they had very different opinions)
- Opinions differ about the proper relationship between the mass media and society.

be divided/split adjective if a group of people is divided or split on something, some of them have one opinion and others have a completely different opinion:

- America's doctors remain deeply divided on the issue of whether it should be legal for a physician to help a terminally ill patient commit suicide.
- Scientists were split on the uses to which the discoveries of atomic physics were being put.

be mistaken adjective used to say that you disagree with someone or with an opinion that they have, and think that they are wrong:

- He is mistaken if he believes that the United States will not respond to this threat.
- Such a view is, however, seriously mistaken.

2 when people disagree about something

disagreement noun [uncountable and countable] if there is disagreement about something, people do not agree about it:

- There is considerable disagreement among experts about the usefulness of these tests.
- She found herself in disagreement with her colleagues on the issue. (=she found that she disagreed with them about it)

dispute noun [uncountable and countable] a serious disagreement, in which two people, organizations, or countries publicly disagree and argue with each other:

- He became involved in a long legal dispute with his publisher.
- There is considerable dispute over the precise definition of this term.
- The United Nations is trying to settle the bitter and long-running dispute between the two countries.

controversy noun [uncountable and countable] serious disagreement, especially with people expressing strongly opposing views in newspapers, in books, on television etc:

- There has been a lot of controversy over abortion in the US.
- Alice Walker writes about the controversy surrounding the film version of her novel, 'The Color Purple'.
- There is some controversy among biologists about whether this is actually true.

3 causing disagreement

contentious adjective a formal word used to describe statements and situations that cause a lot of disagreement and argument:

- Water has been a contentious issue between Turkey and its neighbours for years.
- One particularly contentious area in the field of health and safety is the valuation of human life itself.

controversial adjective causing a lot of disagreement among people, with strongly opposing opinions being expressed in newspapers, in books, on television etc:

- The use of genetic tests is a controversial issue.
- The judge's decision was highly controversial at the time.
- Oliver Cromwell remains a somewhat controversial historical figure.

divisive adjective causing arguments between people and making them form into two opposing groups:

- The war was extremely divisive.
- Same-sex marriage remains a divisive issue in many parts of the US.

Effects

1 words meaning effect

effect noun [uncountable and countable] a change caused by something:

- She was one of the first scientists to study the effects of radiation on the human body.
- At first, the treatment seemed to have no effect.
- Some people believe that television has a positive effect on our lives, while others think that it has a negative effect.
- Building hundreds of new homes is likely to have an adverse effect on the environment. (=a bad effect)
- The food we eat has a significant effect upon our mental ability. (=an important and noticeable effect)
- The decision could have far-reaching effects. (=on a lot of things or people)

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Don't forget that effect is a noun and affect is a verb.

impact noun [uncountable and countable] the effect that something has, especially a big and permanent effect that happens as a result of something important:

- In practice, the change in the law did not have much impact.
- His work has had an enormous impact on the study of genetics. (=a very big impact)
- The war had a devastating impact on the country's industries. (=it caused a great amount of damage)
- Population growth will have a profound impact upon world demand for food. (=a very big impact)

influence noun [uncountable and countable] the effect that something has on people's opinions or behaviour, or on how something develops:

- In his book, McLuhan examines the influence of the media on our society.
- The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes had a considerable influence on Spinoza.
- For much of the 20th century, Berlin exerted a unique influence on the world. (=it had a unique influence)

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

The usual preposition to use with effect, impact, or influence is on. In formal English, people also use upon with the same meaning.

side effect noun [countable] an unwanted effect that something has in addition to its good effects. Side effect is used especially about drugs and medical treatment:

- Experts warn that this is a powerful drug which can have dangerous side effects.
- Common side effects of the treatment include headaches and muscle pains.

aftereffects noun [plural] bad effects that continue for a long time after the thing that caused them:

- The country is still suffering from the aftereffects of war.
- The aftereffects of the illness can last for months.

knock-on effect noun [uncountable and countable] a British English phrase, used when something has an effect on something, which then has an effect on something else:

- The strikes are likely to have a knock-on effect on the whole economy.
- If one flight is delayed, it can have knock-on effects on the other flights.

repercussions noun [plural] the bad effects that happen later as a result of an event, which continue for a long time afterwards:

- It was a major economic crisis with serious social and political repercussions.
- The scandal could have serious repercussions for her political career.

implications noun [plural] the possible effects that something is likely to have in the future:

- The results of the study could have important implications for future educational policy.
- Some people believe that the increase in air travel will have serious implications for the climate.

2 to affect something or someone

affect verb [transitive] to have an effect on something or someone:

- The disease affects women more than men.
- The island was badly affected by last month's storms.
- Smoking while you are pregnant can seriously affect the health of your unborn baby.
- Noise from the airport is adversely affecting the quality of life for local residents. (=it is having a bad effect on their lives)

be bad for to have a bad effect on someone or something:

- When companies close down it is bad for the local economy.
- Studies have shown that eating some types of fish can be bad for you.

be good for to have a good effect on someone or something:

- Mr Blair's speech contained analysis of how environmental action can be good for the economy and for business.
- Bread, especially brown bread, is good for you.

impact/impact on verb [intransitive and transitive] to affect something. Impact is used as a verb especially in business English:

- The recession in the US has negatively impacted sales of luxury cars. (=it has had a bad effect on sales)
- The new regulations will significantly impact on the way food companies operate. (=they will have an important and noticeable effect)

make a difference to have a noticeable effect on a situation:

- New drugs have made a big difference in the treatment of some forms of cancer.
- In practice it makes very little difference which type of oil you use.
- Choosing the right wine can make all the difference to a meal. (=the right choice will make it a very enjoyable meal)

influence verb [transitive] to have an effect on the way someone behaves or thinks, or on the way a situation develops:

- There is no convincing evidence that advertising influences total sales of alcohol.
- Morgan was heavily influenced by Darwin's ideas on evolution. (=he was greatly influenced by them)
- Levels of ozone are strongly influenced by annual variations in the weather.

Emphasizing

1 what you say when emphasizing that something is important

I would like to stress that used when you want to emphasize that something is important:

- I would like to stress that the research is still at an early stage.
- I would like to stress that the characters in this poem bear no resemblance to real people.

it should be noted that a formal phrase used especially in articles and essays, when you want to emphasize that something is important:

- It should be noted that there are a number of alternative methods available.
- It should be noted that the general trend of increasing unemployment has continued over a number of years.

it is worth bearing in mind that used when you want to emphasize that it is important to remember something when you are considering a subject:

- It is worth bearing in mind that 90% of the scientists researching herbicides in the US are employed by chemical companies.

crucial adjective if something is crucial, it is extremely important:

- Burgin distinguishes between photographic theory and photographic criticism (Burgin 1982). This distinction is crucial.
 - Factors such as temperature and acidity play a crucial role in determining how well the process works.
- crucially Crucially, it was claimed that there was an increase in childhood cancers in areas surrounding nuclear power stations.

vital/essential adjective if something is vital or essential, it is extremely important, because without it there could be serious problems:

- These insects play a vital part in the food chain.
- It is essential that the work is carried out as soon as possible.

2 ways of emphasizing one person or thing more than others

especially/particularly adverb:

- The climate is much colder, especially in the far north.
- There has been a big increase in alcohol consumption, particularly among young women.
- It is often mixed with other fibres, particularly cotton.
- He was very much influenced by Picasso, especially when he was young.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Especially and particularly are usually used before a noun phrase or at the beginning of a clause.

in particular used when you want to mention one person or thing that is more important than others or more affected by something than others:

- In the USA in particular, large numbers of ordinary citizens lost money by investing in internet companies.
- The work of Sally Mann, in particular, has made us question representations of children and childhood.
- One of the biggest environmental issues was the movement of hazardous waste. In particular, there was concern about rich, industrialized countries exporting such waste to poor developing countries.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In particular is usually used after a noun phrase. It can also be used at the beginning of a sentence.

notably adverb used when saying that someone or something is an important example of something. Notably is a formal word, which is used especially in articles and essays:

- Some economists, most notably J. M. Keynes, recommended increasing government spending in times of recession, in order to stimulate the economy.
- In 1950, half the world's ships were built in the UK (notably in Liverpool, Sunderland, Belfast and Glasgow).

above all used when emphasizing that something is more important than the other things you have mentioned:

- Cycling is not only pollution-free but also flexible, cheap, and above all, healthy.
- Try to find out if your daughter has any other worries or problems. Above all, show her that you care and will give her all the support and help you can.

most of all more than anyone or anything else:

- America had become an importer of copper, lead, zinc, and most of all, oil.
- Most of all, we need an approach that works.

most importantly/most significantly:

- Perhaps most importantly, the nation seemed to have lost its pride and its sense of direction.
- The 18th century was a period of enormous social change. Most significantly, the Agricultural Revolution drove large numbers of workers into the cities.

3 to emphasize something

emphasize/stress verb [transitive] to say firmly that something is particularly important:

- In their report, they emphasized the need for better police training.
- She stresses that death is not always the aim of those who try to commit suicide.

highlight verb [transitive] to show that something such as a problem or fact is particularly important, especially by providing new information about it:

- This case highlights some of the problems associated with patients travelling long distances for treatment.
- Campbell is more concerned with highlighting the issues involved, rather than providing solutions.

underline/underscore verb [transitive] to show clearly that something is true:

- The high rate of mortality underlines the need for a greater understanding of the causes of the disease.
- Studies and statistics underscore the fact that much of the country's wealth is in the hands of a tiny minority.

draw attention to to say that something is important and needs to be considered, or to make people realise that something is important:

- A number of writers have drawn attention to this fact.
- The study was one of the first to draw attention to the problems faced by severely disabled adults.

point up phrasal verb to write about something in a way that shows it is very important:

- The report pointed up the need for more research on the subject.

Explaining

1 what you say when you are explaining something

this means that/which means that used when saying what the results or effects of what you have just said are:

- Computer technology is constantly being improved. This means that the computer that you have just bought will probably be out of date in only a few months' time.
- There is a shortage of hospital doctors, which means that patients often have to wait a long time for treatment.
- The bank's current interest rate is 3.5%. This means that for every £100 you have in your savings account, you will get £3.50 in interest.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

You use **This means that** at the beginning of a sentence. You use **which means that** at the beginning of a clause.

that is used when explaining the meaning of the previous word or phrase, by giving more information:

- The book is about art in the modern period, **that is**, art since 1900.
- Her son suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. **That is**, he finds it difficult to pay attention or stay quiet for more than a short period of time.

ie/i.e. used when explaining the meaning of the previous word or phrase, by giving more information:

- The new law will come into force at the end of next month, **ie** March 31st.
- There has been a decline in the number of 'good' jobs, **i.e.** ones that are highly skilled and well-paid.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

ie is the abbreviation for *id est*, which is Latin for *that is*.
In formal essay writing, it is usually better to use *that is*.

in other words/to put it another way used when saying something in a different way, either in order to explain it more clearly, or to emphasize the point that you want to make:

- Average incomes fell, while the incomes of the top 20 percent of the population increased. **In other words**, the rich got richer.
- In a democracy, the government must be accountable to the people. **The people should**, in other words, be able to get rid of their rulers through elections.
- Using this software would offer a 15% saving in space. **To put it another way**, this will mean an extra 12Gb free on an 80Gb disk.

to put it simply used when saying something in a simple way so that the reader can understand what you mean:

- What the treatment aims to do, **to put it simply**, is to make the skin grow back over the wound.
- A romantic novel should demand a certain level of emotional involvement on the part of the reader. **To put it simply**, the novel should not just describe a love relationship; it should allow the reader to participate in it.

specifically adverb used when saying exactly what you are referring to, when you are explaining something:

- Several prisoners reported some kind of physical abuse. **Specifically**, 42 were beaten; eight were roughly handled; and four more were forced to remain standing for hours at a time.

- What we need is a stable economic climate that encourages companies to invest on a long-term basis. More specifically, we need to get rid of the current high taxes on investment income.

2 words meaning to explain something

explain verb [intransitive and transitive] to give someone the information that they need in order to understand something:

- He was the first scientist to explain how the process of evolution works.
- The book begins by explaining the difference between psychology and psychiatry.
- There are a number of theories which seek to explain why (=try to explain why) zebras have stripes.

give/offer/provide an explanation to explain something:

- He attempts to give a simple explanation of his theory.
- It is possible that some recent research by NASA scientists could offer an explanation for this phenomenon.
- They were unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for their behaviour.

set out phrasal verb to explain facts, reasons, plans etc by stating them clearly and in a carefully planned order:

- He sets out his plans for an ideal Roman city in the first volume of his work.
- The document sets out exactly how the money will be spent.

go through phrasal verb to explain all the details about something in the right order, so that someone can understand it:

- She begins her article by going through all the reasons why people have opposed the use of nuclear energy.

outline verb [transitive] to explain the main ideas about something, without giving all the details:

- In his introduction, Piaget outlines the four main stages in a child's development.
- The purpose of this chapter is to outline the basic principles which form the foundations of the English legal system.

expand on phrasal verb to add more details or information to what has already been said:

- Melville saw the ocean as the source of all life. He expands on this idea in his novel, 'Moby Dick'.
- The author expands on this theme at length (=writes a lot about it).

clarify verb [transitive] to make something clearer:

- This chapter aims to clarify some of the most important issues in genetics today.
- In his speech the prime minister attempted to clarify his position on economic reform.

Giving examples

1 what you say when giving an example

for example used when giving an example of the kind of thing that you have just mentioned:

- People watch huge amounts of television. In the United States, for example, many children spend more hours watching television than they do attending school.
- A lot of English words come from Latin. For example 'homicide' comes from the Latin words 'homo' (=man) and 'cidium' (=killing).

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In essays, for example is often used later on in a sentence, rather than at the beginning: The influence of Eastern music can be heard in Western classical music, for example in the piano works of Debussy.

The abbreviation of for example is eg. In formal essays you usually use the full phrase for example.

for instance means the same as for example, but it is slightly less formal:

- Our climate is already showing signs of change. Last year, for instance, was one of the hottest summers on record.
- There is a great deal we can do to reduce the amount of pollution we produce. For instance, we can use our cars less, and use public transport instead.

particularly/in particular adverb used when saying that something is especially true about someone or something:

- Tourism is very important for the economy, particularly in the south of the country.
- His work had a big influence on Picasso in particular.

be a good/typical/classic/obvious etc example:

- The United Kingdom is a good example of a country that consists of several smaller states.
- Her case is a classic example of this kind of problem.

be a case in point used when saying that something is a very good and relevant example of the kind of thing that you have just mentioned:

- Many native English plants and animals are under threat. The red squirrel is a case in point.
- The government has consistently ignored basic human rights. A case in point is the recent killing of 10 political prisoners.

take/consider verb [transitive] used when you are about to talk about a particular situation that you want to show as an example:

- Science has yet to answer some important questions. Take, for instance, (=consider the following example) the theory that the universe started with the 'big bang'. What came before the big bang?
- Many students are bored with their studies. Consider the case of Christina. She is a hard-working student who plans to go to college. Yet she says of her education, "It's not like I'm thinking a lot here."

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Take and consider are always used at the start of a sentence.

by way of illustration a formal phrase, used especially when you are going to give a long example that shows what you mean:

- Revolutions often lead to dictatorships. By way of illustration, consider the events that followed the French Revolution.

- Plants have been used in Cambodia in many ways for many centuries. By way of illustration, of the 2,300 species of plants in Cambodia, approximately 40 percent have a traditional use, primarily as food and medicine.

be shown by used when giving an example which shows that what you are saying is true:

- The people who live there are quite rich. This is shown by the size of their houses.
- Metal tools were produced here for thousands of years, as is shown by weapons discovered in ancient tombs.

this is true of/this was true of used when giving an example which shows that what you are saying is true:

- Many writers have suffered from discrimination. This was true of Oscar Wilde, and also of André Gide.

2 what you say when there are a lot of other examples of something

such as used when giving one or two typical examples of the kind of thing or person that you mean, when there are many other examples:

- The factory produced electrical goods such as washing machines and cookers.
- Girls do better than boys in subjects such as English.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Such as does not usually have a comma before it, whereas for example and including usually do.

including preposition used when you want to give examples of the kinds of thing that something includes:

- She has many interests, including opera and ballet.
- The company produces 340 drugs and cosmetic products, including penicillin, antibiotics and aspirins.

to name but a few used after examples of something, when saying that there are many more that you could mention:

- He wrote several famous books: '1984', 'Animal Farm', and 'The Road to Wigan Pier', to name but a few.

etc/et cetera adverb used when you want to say that there are many other examples of other things of the same kind:

- It is best to avoid tea, coffee, alcohol etc.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In formal essays it is better not to use etc, and to rephrase the sentence using such as: It is best to avoid drinks such as tea, coffee, or alcohol.

Do not use eg and etc in the same sentence.

3 to give something or someone as an example

give the example of something/give something as an example:

- The writer gives the example of Johnny Saxon who, three years after winning the world boxing title, was charged with burglary.
- He gives as an example the island of Aru in southeast Indonesia, where the number of turtles has decreased dramatically.

cite verb [transitive] a formal word meaning to give something or someone an example:

- She cites a survey last year, which showed that 84 percent of shoppers would be prepared to return containers to retailers if supermarkets set up a suitable system.
- Sendak cites Tolstoy as an example of an author who needs no illustrator.

Giving Exceptions

1 ways of saying that something or someone is an exception

except preposition used when saying that a statement does not include a particular person or thing:

- The office is open every day except Sundays.
- Most of the critics liked the play, except for one critic on the Los Angeles Times.
- Except for a few years in the early sixties and seventies, inflation has been a continuing feature of American life since World War II.
- The area looks very much like the state of Iowa, except that it is surrounded by beautiful snow-covered mountains.
- Except in an emergency, these doors must remain closed.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Except and except for mean the same thing. You can use except for and except in at the beginning of a sentence. Otherwise, except does not come at the beginning of a sentence.

apart from/aside from preposition used when mentioning one or two things that do not fit the main thing that you are saying, especially when they are not very important:

- Aside from one or two minor errors, this is an excellent piece of research.
- The films were all made in Hollywood, apart from one, which was made in the UK.
- The weather was not very good in the first week. Apart from that, it was a good holiday.

excluding/not including preposition used when saying that something, especially a total number or amount, does not include a particular thing or person:

- The software costs \$49.95, not including tax.
- Excluding students, the total number of unemployed rose from 2 million to 2.3 million.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Excluding is more formal than not including.

with the exception of/with one exception formal phrases used when you want to emphasize that something does not include a particular thing or person:

- Denmark has more wind turbines than any other place in the world, with the exception of California.
- With the exception of skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women.
- The prisons are, with one exception, overcrowded and lacking in facilities for prisoners.

but preposition used especially after nothing, no one, any, anyone, anything, all, everything and everyone, when saying that something is the only thing, or someone is the only person:

- There is nothing but trees, for mile after mile.
- The garment covers everything but the eyes.
- All but a few of her family died of the disease.

other than a phrase meaning except, used especially in negative sentences:

- He had no interests other than teaching.
- No one other than her knew about the plan.
- Daley has said little about his childhood, other than that it was happy and normal.
- Some airlines will not allow you to take pets other than dogs, cats and birds.

in a few cases/in a small number of cases used when emphasizing that something only happens a few times or to a few people:

- In a few cases the information has gone missing from the files.
- Surgery can only help in a small number of cases.

2 someone or something that is not included

exception noun [uncountable and countable] someone or something that is different from the others and cannot therefore be included in a statement:

- The health of most of the patients improved, although there were one or two exceptions, (=one or two patients did not get better)
- Apart from a few minor exceptions (=unimportant exceptions), the two countries' legal systems are very similar.
- Not many first-rate writers have written about film. A notable exception (=an important exception) is Grahame Greene, who reviewed movies regularly between 1935 and 1940.
- All societies, without exception, share the same characteristics. (=used when saying that there are no exceptions)

Giving Opinions

1 what you say when giving your opinion about something

in my opinion/in my view used when giving your opinion about something:

- Their concerns are, in my opinion, fully justified.
- In my opinion, the cathedral is one of the world's most beautiful churches.
- In my view, the court made the right decision.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Don't say 'According to my opinion' when you mean in my opinion.

I think that used when giving your opinion about something:

- I think that everyone should be able to own their own home.
- I think that hunting should be banned.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In formal essay writing, people often try to avoid using phrases with 'I' or 'me', and use more impersonal phrases such as in this writer's view or in this writer's opinion.

When you are writing essays, it is a good idea to quote another writer to support your argument, rather than just say I think that ... This will give your argument much more authority. For example: As Hobsbawm (1969) has pointed out, the rise of the cotton industry created a huge demand for cotton goods.

in this writer's view/opinion used in formal essays when giving your opinion:

- In this writer's view, the present system is in need of reform.
- In this writer's opinion, the arguments against using nuclear energy are overwhelming.

it seems to me that used when saying that you think that something is probably true. You use this especially when you have considered a situation carefully and want to give your overall opinion about it:

- It seems to me that there is some truth in her argument.

I believe that used about strongly held beliefs, for example about moral issues:

- I believe that the death penalty is morally wrong.

2 ways of saying what another person's opinion is

somebody's opinion/view is that used when saying what another writer's opinion is about something:

- The judge's opinion was that she was fit to stand trial.
- His view is that consumers should be told the whole truth about the product they are buying.
- The general opinion is that the combined vaccine works better. (=most people think this)

in somebody's opinion/view used when saying what another writer's opinion is about something:

- The important thing, in Galileo's opinion, was to accept the facts and build a theory to fit them.
- Criticism is quite different, in Barthes's view, from ordinary reading.
- In his opinion, the portrait painter seeks to capture the moment when the model looks most like himself or herself.

be of the opinion that/take the view that to have a particular opinion. These are formal phrases:

- Until then, most scientists were of the opinion that these variations in weather were compatible with established climate patterns.

- Levitt takes the view that low prices are the key to marketing success.

have/hold an opinion to have a particular opinion:

- Everybody has a different opinion of what America represents.
- They held the same opinions on many issues.
- Voters tend to have a low opinion of politicians. (=think they are not very good)
- Teenage girls generally have a higher opinion of themselves as learners than boys, according to a recent study. (=they think that they are better)

for somebody preposition used when saying what someone's opinion is, especially when this is a general opinion which also affects their other ideas about a subject. For somebody is usually used at the beginning of a sentence:

- For Chomsky, language is an abstract system of rules which is used by human minds for transmitting and receiving ideas.
- For Vygotsky, social factors play a fundamental role in intellectual development.

as far as somebody is concerned used when you want to emphasize that you are talking about the opinion of a particular person or group:

- As far as he was concerned, the failure showed the limits of military intervention.
- The election was a formality as far as the ruling party was concerned.

from sb's point of view used when saying what someone's reaction to something is, based on how it affects them:

- From their point of view, the system worked quite well.
- It is important to consider the situation from the point of view of the ordinary man in the street.

3 to say what your opinion is about something

give/express/voice an opinion to say what you think about something:

- Other writers have expressed similar opinions on the subject.
- In his speech he was simply voicing an opinion that was held by many people at the time.
- The commission has yet to give its opinion on the matter.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Express and voice an opinion are more formal than give an opinion, but mean the same thing.

make your views known (about something) to tell people about your opinions, especially so that they can be considered when making decisions about something that affects you:

- Old people seldom have the opportunity to make their views known.

Giving Reasons

1 what you say when giving reasons for something

because conjunction used when giving the reason for something:

- The idea was rejected because it was too expensive.
- They were discriminated against because of their colour.
- Because many old people are on low incomes, they are often unable to afford adequate heating in the winter.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

When writing essays, you don't usually use because at the beginning of a sentence when you are referring back to the previous sentence. For example, instead of writing "Many firms are building factories there. Because wages are much lower." it is much better to write: Many firms are building factories there because wages are much lower. But if the two sentences you want to connect are very long, you can write The reason is or The reason for this is at the start of a second sentence.

the reason (for this) is used when giving the reason for something, especially when the explanation is quite long:

- These printers quickly achieved a market share of over 60%. The reason for this is that the technology they use is much simpler — and therefore cheaper — and running costs are lower.

why conjunction used when writing about the reason that causes something to happen:

- No one knows why the dinosaurs died out so suddenly.
- There are many reasons why people are having fewer children.
- Girls mature earlier than boys. This may explain why they perform better at school.

in order to so that someone can do something, or so that something can happen:

- Many criminals steal in order to get money to buy drugs. (=the reason they steal is so that they can buy drugs)

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In order to is typically used in formal English. In less formal contexts, you often just use to, for example: I wanted to go to France to improve my knowledge of the language.

for preposition because of a particular reason:

- Most people go there for sightseeing.
- The names cannot be published for legal reasons.
- The data will be used for research purposes.

through preposition used when explaining why someone succeeded or failed:

- She got the job through hard work. (=because she worked very hard)
- The records were lost, either through carelessness or incompetence.

as a result of used when explaining what made something happen:

- Sea levels are rising as a result of global warming.
- As a result of his work, illnesses such as tuberculosis can now be treated.

due to/owing to preposition used to give the reason why something has happened:

- She resigned due to ill health.
- The number of songbirds has declined. This is partly due to modern farming methods.

- Owing to lack of public interest, the programme was abandoned.

2 words meaning reason

reason noun [countable] why something happens or why someone does something:

- There were two main reasons for his success.
- 39% of workers gave poor working conditions as a reason for leaving their previous job.
- The reasons why this happens are as follows.
- The reason that sales have not increased is that we had a very cold summer.
- There are good reasons for believing that the Earth has not increased in size during the past 500,000 years.

explanation noun [countable] a set of reasons that is intended to help you understand why something happens:

- Scientists have offered several possible explanations for these results.
- No one has ever really provided a satisfactory explanation of how children learn language.

motive noun [countable] the reason that makes someone decide to do something, especially something dishonest:

- There may have been a political motive for the killing.
- Some people have questioned the motives behind the decision.

grounds noun [plural] a reason that makes it right or fair for someone to do something. You use grounds especially when saying that it seems justified to think that something is true, or when an action is justified according to official rules:

- There are strong grounds for believing that what he says is true.
- The latest crime statistics provide some grounds for optimism.
- He was refused permission to stay on the grounds that he had entered the country illegally. (=for that reason)
- They recommended joining the EU on purely economic grounds. (=only for economic reasons)

argument noun [countable] a reason or set of reasons that someone uses to try to persuade another person to agree with them:

- There are strong environmental arguments for limiting car use.
- One of the main arguments against the death penalty is that an innocent person could accidentally be executed.
- I do not agree with the argument that experiments are necessary on live animals.
- There is little evidence to support their argument.
- He was the first person to put forward this argument. (=to suggest this set of reasons)

rationale noun [countable usually singular] a series of reasons that someone uses to explain why they need to do something in a particular way:

- All organisations need a rationale for dividing up their work.
- In the first part of the book I will attempt to provide a rationale for such an approach.
- The document outlines the rationale behind the government's economic reforms.

justification noun [uncountable and countable] a reason why you think it is right to do something, especially something that seems wrong or unfair to other people:

- The US government's main justification for the war was that they wanted to bring democracy to the country.
- There is, he states, no justification for killing another human being under any circumstances.

basis noun [countable] the main ideas, reasons, arguments etc on which something is based:

- There is no scientific basis for such beliefs.
- Piaget provided a theoretical basis for studying children's mental behaviour.
- Newton's work forms the basis of much of modern physics.

3 a reason that does not seem believable

pretext noun [countable] a false reason that someone gives in order to hide their real reason for doing something:

- They used religion as a pretext for their activities.
- People were sent to prison or labour camps on the flimsiest of pretexts. (=for reasons that seem very unlikely and difficult to believe)
- Police went into the area under the pretext of looking for drug dealers. (=using this as a reason)

excuse noun [countable] a reason that you give to try to explain why you did something bad, especially one that is not true:

- Poverty should not be seen as an excuse for crime.
- The soldiers' excuse was that they were only obeying orders.
- People are tired of listening to the same old feeble excuses. (=excuses that seem very weak and not believable)

Increasing

1 to increase

increase verb [intransitive] to become larger in number, amount, price, or value:

- Last year, the number of burglaries increased by 15 percent.
- The percentage of households with a computer increased from 32.9% to 52%.
- The world's population is increasing at a rate of 91 million people each year.
- Land prices have increased dramatically during the last thirty years. (=by a surprisingly large amount)
- The ratio of women to men in management positions has been increasing steadily. (=more women are becoming managers)

rise/go up verb [intransitive] phrasal verb to increase. Rise and go up are used especially about numbers, prices or temperatures. They can also be used about the level or standard of something:

- Fuel prices rose by over 10 percent.
- Last month unemployment went up from 1.6 million to just over 1.7 million.
- Crime rates have risen sharply in inner city areas. (=they have increased by a large amount in a short time)
- World demand for oil is rising steadily at around 2 percent a year.
- Sea temperatures have been rising gradually over the past 30 years.
- Living standards have gone up dramatically. (=by a surprisingly large amount)

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Rise is more formal than go up.

If you want to say that something 'has increased', you can say that it is up, for example: Profits are up by almost 50%.

grow verb [intransitive] to increase, especially gradually over a period of time. Grow is used about numbers or amounts, or about the total amount of business or trade:

- The volume of traffic on our roads continues to grow.
- The economy is growing by about 2.5% a year.
- Since 1990, U.S. imports of foreign goods have grown at a rate of 7.7 percent per year.

double/triple/quadruple verb [intransitive] to become twice as much, three times as much, or four times as much:

- Since 1950, the number of people dying from cancer has almost doubled.
- During the last 15 years, earnings have tripled for men and doubled for women.
- The production of maize quadrupled.

expand verb [intransitive] to become larger in size, or to include a wider range of activities:

- After two years of no growth, the economy started to expand again in 2003.
- The report estimates that up to 40,000 plants could die out if the population expands from 6 billion to 8 billion by 2020, as currently predicted.

soar verb [intransitive] to increase and reach a very high level. Soar is used about numbers and amounts, or about people's feelings and attitudes, and is especially used in journalism:

- Interest rates soared to over 100 percent.
- The rumours sent house prices soaring. (=made them increase to a very high level)
- The president's popularity soared. (=he became extremely popular)

escalate verb [intransitive] to increase to a high level. Escalate is used about things that you do not want to increase such as costs, crimes, or violence:

- Energy costs have escalated.
- The violence began to escalate and the demonstrators started attacking the police.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

The -ing forms of many of these verbs can also be used as adjectives, for example: the increasing demand for cheap goods

- rising unemployment
- the growing problem of industrial pollution
- soaring inflation
- escalating fuel costs

2 to make something increase

increase verb [transitive] to make something become larger in number, amount, price, or value:

- The company wants to increase the number of phones it sells in the UK.
- Smoking increases the risk of a heart attack by almost ten times.

raise verb [transitive] to increase prices, taxes, rents etc. Raise is also used about increasing levels and standards:

- The government will either have to raise taxes or reduce spending.
- The price of a barrel of oil was raised to over \$30.
- The government says that it wants to raise standards in schools.
- Saturated fats, which are found mostly in animal products, raise the level of cholesterol in the blood.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Don't confuse rise and raise. Don't say 'I don't think it would be a good idea to rise cigarette prices'. Say: I don't think it would be a good idea to raise cigarette prices.

Raise is more formal than put up.

put up phrasal verb to increase prices, taxes, rents etc:

- The company plans to put up the price of the drug by up to 20 percent.
- In the long term, unless the economy recovers, the government will be forced to put up taxes.

double/triple/quadruple verb [transitive] to increase the amount of something so that it is twice, three times, or four times as much:

- The United States has more than doubled the amount of aid it gives to developing countries.
- The company hopes to triple the size of its packaging business.

expand verb [transitive] to increase something so that it includes a wider range of things, or to increase the size of a business:

- The college is expanding its range of courses.
- Within a few months she expanded the business and took over a computer firm employing 120 people.

boost verb [transitive] to increase sales, profits, or the production of something, especially when they have been lower than you want them to be:

- Farmers can boost their profits by selling direct to customers.
- The hot weather has boosted sales of ice cream.
- Scientists are helping to boost rice production using genetically modified rice.

extend verb [transitive] to increase your power or influence, or to increase the number of things that you are involved in:

- The US wants to extend its influence in the region.
- Banks are extending the scope of their activities and are offering services such as insurance and advice on investments.

step up phrasal verb to increase your efforts or activities, especially in order to change a situation:

- The UN Security Council has stepped up the pressure on the Sudanese government to end the fighting.
- The organization is stepping up its campaign to persuade drivers to leave their cars at home and take public transport.

add to phrasal verb to cause something to increase in cost or value, or to cause a situation to become worse or more difficult:

- Rising fuel prices will add to the cost of basic goods.
- A new kitchen can add to the value of your home.
- The swarms of mosquitoes only added to their problems.
- Just to add to the confusion, there are several other common names for this plant.

3 an increase

increase noun [uncountable and countable] an occasion when the amount or number of something becomes bigger:

- There has been a significant increase in the number of people living alone.
- England's countryside is under threat from a massive increase in (=a very big increase) traffic.
- Profits rose by \$2million. This represents an increase of 13.4 per cent compared to the previous year.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

The usual preposition to use with increase is in. Don't say 'the increase of the earth's temperature'. Say: the increase in the earth's temperature. You use of with numbers, for example: an increase of 15%.

growth noun [singular, uncountable] an increase in the number, size, or importance of something. Growth is also used when saying that a company or a country's economy becomes more successful:

- There has been a huge growth in sales of big 4-wheel-drive vehicles.
- Many people are concerned about the enormous growth in the world's population.
- The astonishing growth of the Internet has had a dramatic effect on people's lives.
- Japan experienced a period of rapid economic growth.

rise noun [countable] an increase in the amount of something, or in the standard or level of something:

- The latest figures show a sharp rise (=a sudden big rise) in unemployment in the region.
- There was a 34 percent rise in the number of armed robberies.
- The majority of families experienced a rise in living standards.
- The instruments showed a dramatic rise (=a surprisingly large increase) in the level of radioactivity. Something was clearly going wrong.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

In American English, a raise is an increase in someone's salary. In British English, this is usually referred to as a pay rise.

build-up noun [countable usually singular] a gradual increase in something harmful, dangerous, or worrying:

- The use of fossil fuels is causing a build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which contributes to the greenhouse effect.
- She had a build-up of fluid on her knee.
- The crisis led to a big military build-up. (=the size of the army was greatly increased, especially in preparation for war)

surge noun [countable usually singular] a sudden increase in something such as profits, demand, or interest:

- There has been a big surge in demand for organically grown food.
- We have seen a tremendous surge of interest in Chinese medicine.

explosion noun [countable] a sudden very large increase in the amount or number of something:

- The country experienced a population explosion.
- There has been an explosion in the number of fast food restaurants.
- The book caused an explosion of interest in Renaissance Italy.

boom noun [singular] a sudden large increase in trade, profits or sales, with the result that a country, company, or industry becomes very successful. Boom is also used about a sudden increase in interest in something, with the result that it becomes very popular:

- the German economic boom of the 1960s
- the internet boom
- There has been a boom in sales of diet books and videos.

4 when something does not increase, or stops increasing

remain constant/stay the same to continue to be at the same level or rate and not change:

- Her rate of breathing remained constant.
- The deer population has remained constant for many years.
- His weight stayed the same.

STUDY NOTE: Grammar

Remain constant is more formal than stay the same.

peak/reach a peak verb to stop increasing, after reaching a high level:

- Inflation peaked at 25%.
- The number of cases of the disease reached its peak.

level off/out phrasal verb to stop increasing, and remain at the same level:

- Car sales in Japan levelled off in September after months of continued growth.
- Statistics show that the number of work-related deaths appears to be levelling off at 1.6 per 100,000 employees.