



*Auntie Alligator's List of Don'ts*  
*June 2021 version*

**AVOID THE INCORRECT USE  
OF THESE IN YOUR WRITING  
AND SPEAKING**

**NEW FEATURES!** Entries marked “CE” are particularly important for classroom English; entries marked “AE” are particularly important for academic English. Some items are labelled **LPT** because they are language features that are more likely than the others to occur in the “Grammar and Usage” section of the Language Proficiency Test.<sup>2</sup>

The more grumpies ☹☹☹ an entry has, the more frequently it is likely to occur, so sit up and pay attention, because alligators have prodigious appetites.

The List is presented in alphabetical order. At the end, there are sections focussing on specific topics: non-count nouns, complementation (e.g. -ing or to), devoicing, collocation and invented words. There is also a section on *emailing lecturers* at the end of Auntie Alligator's List.

\*\*\*\*\*

*The List*

**LPT** ☹ *absolutely*, as in ☹ \**absolutely difficult*, \**absolutely interesting* or \**absolutely hungry*. “Absolutely” is a so-called “non-gradable” adverb and is normally only used with “non-gradable” adjectives – those whose meaning is absolute: ☺ *absolutely impossible*, *absolutely fascinating*, *absolutely starving*. Other common non-gradable adverbs are *completely*, *utterly*, *entirely*, *quite* (where “quite”=*absolutely*). Common gradable adverbs are *very*, *extremely*, *reasonably*, *slightly*, *rather*, *fairly*, *quite* (where “quite”=*rather*). The adverbs *totally* and *really*, which are very common in *informal* speech or writing, are used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives.

☹ *absolve*. In English, you are absolved from guilt or blame. (Unless you do some of the Don'ts Auntie Alligator warned you about.) You ☺ **do** or **complete** a BA degree, a training course, an internship, etc.

**AE** ☹ *according to* is a phrase that indicates that somebody's words or opinions are being quoted, but not your own – this is wrong: ☹ “\**According to me*/\**According to my opinion*, gerbils and hamsters are unsuitable pets for children”. It should be ☺ “*I believe/I think/It seems to me* that gerbils ...”.

<sup>1</sup> *Captain Alligator, Auntie Alligator and Auntie Alligator's List of Don'ts* are the intellectual property of Pat Skorge.

The spelling and usage in the List, unless otherwise indicated, is BrE. Alligators *are* native to the UK, after all.

<sup>2</sup> This DOES NOT MEAN that features NOT marked “LPT” will never appear in the LPT, and it DOES NOT MEAN that you should ignore the rest - many features not marked “LPT” are still extremely relevant for the Summary, and the whole List is relevant to all your use of English, especially in written papers, for all eternity. Only studying the features marked “LPT” on this list is also not in any way sufficient to prepare for the LPT. You also need to study the material from your Grammar seminars and use grammar books or online materials to understand and work on areas you've noticed you need practice in.

In the third person, write ☺ "According to Gregory, gerbils and hamsters **are** (NOT *"\*would be!"*) unsuitable pets for children" OR "Gregory *claimed/maintained that* gerbils are ... children".

"According to" is often misused, as in the following examples:

☹ ☺ "Hamsters and gerbils are popular pets for children. Gerbils are sociable and lively, but *according to* hamsters, they are solitary animals which dislike being disturbed". It should be ☺ **as regards/as for hamsters** (unless it is a discussion of anti-gerbil propaganda issued by hamsters); **"as regards"** is often the best way to express *in Bezug auf/was X betrifft*.

☹ ☺ "According to their nocturnal habits, hamsters are unsuitable pets for children" should be **in view of** or **because of**.

☹ ☺ "According to the research we had done on hamsters, jirds and gerbils, we decided to buy a bushy-tailed jird" should be **on the basis of**.

"According to" is a useful phrase to indicate that an opinion or information is not your own – you just heard it from someone else. In German, this can be done by using "sollen" or the *Konjunktiv*, but the same effect cannot be achieved with a form of the verb in English:  
e.g. Eine Froschplage soll Bielefeld laut Experten gestern Nachmittag heimgesucht haben. OR:  
Bielefeld sei laut Experten gestern von einer Froschplage heimgesucht worden. -> According to experts, Bielefeld was struck by a plague of frogs yesterday.

**AE** ☺ "acquisition" is the noun from "acquire": the word ☹ *\*acquirement* does not exist.

☹ adapt vs. adopt: a vampire novel can be ☺ **adapted** (=changed) for the screen and become a vampire film. You can ☺ **adopt** an abandoned baby vampire or ☺ **adopt** the hairstyle worn by the star of a vampire film.

☹ \*adaption is not an English word; ☺ "adaptation" is.

☹ ☹ adequate does not mean good or plenty; "adequate housing/nutrition" means (possibly only just) acceptable, suitable or sufficient. If a student's mark/result/performance/work is described as "adequate", it is not satisfactory; it is only just acceptable. In other contexts, German "adäquat" is often best translated as "suitable", "acceptable", "appropriate" or "effective" ("suitable", not "adequate", occupation; "appropriate", not "adequate" response/answer/behaviour).

**LPT** ☹ advice is non-count: don't write "advices" or "an advice"; the verb is "advise" in both BrE and AmE. Don't use plural verbs or pronouns with non-count nouns. For example, writing *"\*Auntie Alligator gave me some advice on grammar, and they were wrong"* is wrong.

☹ after all does not mean "in the end" or "finally". It is used like this:

A) I studied until four in the morning, then Professor Fury didn't give us a test in his class ☺ **after all!**

B) Well, he's forgetful. ☺ **After all**, he is nearly sixty.

**LPT** ☹ age: ☹ *"\*in the age of six I got my first pet rat"* or *"\*with the age of six I got (etc.)"* should be ☺ **"at the age of six I got my first pet rat"**. Say ☺ "I give rat-training lessons to **three children of ten** OR **three ten-year-old children**" (NOT ☹ "three children at the age of ten").

**LPT** ☹ agree with vs. agree to: ☺ **agree with** you = I think the same thing; I am of the same opinion.

☺ I'd love to keep a pot-bellied pig as a pet, but my parents would never **agree to** it = allow it.

Thus, ☹ "I agree to you" does not mean you share someone's views.

**AE** ☹️ *all in all* is a horrible, pointless phrase. Best avoid it. It makes Auntie Alligator fractious – and hungry. Very hungry. (Also see "conclusion".)

☹️ **amount** is only used with *non-count nouns* in formal English; thus it is wrong to write ☹️ "a large amount of students were swimming in the alligator-infested creek". Strictly speaking, it should be 😊 "a large **number**". However, an ever-increasing number [see?] of native speakers DO use "amount" with non-count nouns. Naughty, naughty native speakers! Soon there won't be any rules left to learn!

☹️ **and**: avoid using "and" between two attributive adjectives<sup>3</sup>, especially if they are overused ones, as in ☹️ "Gloria cuddled the cute and small kitten", ☹️ "I gasped when I saw the big and nice university buildings", ☹️ "After the great and exciting speech of welcome by the rector, I felt totally inspired". The phrases 😊 *cute little kitten*, 😊 *huge, imposing university buildings*, 😊 *witty, encouraging speech* are much stronger, because the "and" has disappeared and the author has used a thesaurus to find more sophisticated adjectives. Of course, "and" sometimes *is* used between adjectives to good effect, as in 😊 "Bielefeld is a *vibrant and bewitching* city". (Auntie Alligator's task is to tell you what not to do. She is not interested in the truth.)

☹️ **anxious** in ☹️☹️ "We were anxious to get struck by lightning" should be 😊 "We were afraid of being struck/we were anxious about the possibility of being struck". If you are anxious TO DO something, it means you are eager for it.

☹️ **anyways** is not standard English; 😊 "anyway" is.

☹️ **as**: see "like"

☹️ **as**: "as I was six", if supposed to mean "als ich sechs war", should be "**when** I was six".

☹️ **as** don't use "as" instead of 😊 "**such as**", as in ☹️ "Auntie Alligator's List includes numerous references to small rodents as gerbils and mice."

☹️ **as well** usually comes at the end of the clause; only "as well **as**" can come at the beginning: 😊 "As well as giving private lessons ..., I also did a teaching practical ...", but ☹️ "I gave private lessons and did a teaching practical as well".

**AE** ☹️ **aspect** (the word, not the grammatical phenomenon) is sometimes used inappropriately, as in ☹️ "the aspects of this topic are interesting to me". Try: "the **questions/issues** raised by the topic of X are complex/intriguing".

Rather than ☹️ "There were a number of aspects which influenced the decision", write 😊 "There were a number of **factors** which influenced the decision."

☹️ "Gerbils and bushy-tailed jirds differ in some aspects" should be 😊 "differ in some **respects**". (This does not mean you should avoid the useful word "aspect"; just avoid incorrect uses of it.)

**AE** ☹️☹️☹️ **at first** does not mean "first" or "firstly". It does not designate the first step in a process, as in ☹️ *at first you go to the HRZ website, then you try in vain to set up your email account and finally you go raving mad and attack your computer with a bicycle pump*. It is used like this: 😊 *At first I thought the university building was merely unattractive, but after I had been there for a few months I began to regard it as absolutely hideous.*

---

<sup>3</sup> An attributive adjective comes before a noun phrase, as in "a hideous university building". A predicative adjective follows a *copular verb*, as in "the university was deserted" or "the university *smelt* peculiar".

**AE** ☹ at hand, as in ☹ "The central focus of *the thesis at hand* is ...". In English, it's sufficient to write ☺ "The central focus of **this** paper/BA thesis is ..." or even, (\*gasp\*) ☹ "The central focus of **my** paper/BA thesis is ...".

Only if another paper/thesis has just been referred to should the ghastly phrase "the thesis at hand" be used.

**AE** ☹ at last does not mean either "in the end" or "lastly". It is used as an expression of relief or annoyance when something that has been anticipated or awaited for a long time has finally happened, as in this dialogue:

*A:* "This is the computer shop. We've fixed your computer."

☹*B:* "AT LAST!!! I'VE BEEN WAITING THREE WEEKS!" (B may insert expletives before "last" and "weeks").

**AE** ☹ attachment: you attach, um, attachments to emails; the German is *Anhang*. But in academic writing, an *Anhang*, additional material added at the end of a paper, is called an **appendix** in English (plural "appendices" or "appendixes"). In the human body, the appendix is an additional portion of the gut (*Blinddarm*; plural "appendixes").

**LPT** ☹ avoid: ☹ "try to *avoid that* your gerbil *chews* through your computer cables" should be ☺ "try to *prevent* your gerbil *from chewing* through your computer cables".

☹ bachelor: a bachelor is a man who is not (yet) married. ☹ *\*I make a bachelor* OR *\*I do a bachelor* are not appropriate ways for BA students to describe the studies they are engaged in. Say ☺ I am doing a (Bachelor's) degree in British and American Studies OR ☺ I am doing an English degree OR ☺ I am doing a BA degree in English/a teaching degree in English and German.

**AE** ☹ base something on: ☺ "The film **is based on** the novel of the same name" is correct. ☹ *"\*The film bases on the novel ..."* is not.

☹ bath: this is not a room. ☺ A bath (BrE) or bathtub (AmE) is the thing you fill with water and get into for a good soak. In BrE, the act of filling it with water is "running a bath", in AmE, it's "filling the tub". In BrE, **the bathroom** is the room where the bath (and maybe the toilet) is located. In AmE, **the bathroom** is the room where the toilet (and maybe a bathtub or shower) is located. In BrE, you ask "Where's the toilet/lavatory/loo"? In AmE, you ask "Where's the bathroom/washroom/ restroom/?"

**LPT** **AE** ☺ become is often a better translation of *werden* than ☹ **get**, except in *informal* English (see "get").

**LPT** ☹ behaviour is a non-count noun, except in a scientific context.

**LPT** ☹☹ being is unnecessary here: *"\*People who have jobs while being students are often sleepy in class."* Use ☺ "while they are students" or "while studying" instead.

"Having" is sometimes used in a similarly inappropriate way: ☹ "Students having jobs are likely to snore in the tram" should be ☺ "students who have jobs".

**LPT** ☹ better (1): this is *colloquial*. ☹ "You better do your homework, or Captain Alligator will get you."

These are WRONG: ☹☹ *\*You had better done your homework; \*You have better had done your homework; \*You had better to do your homework.*

This is correct (really!) ☺ You **had better do** your homework.

☹ better (2): ☹ "The cherries would be better to reach if we had an eight-metre-long pole" should be ☺ "easier to reach"

☹ bigger: as in ☹ "Bielefeld is a bigger town in East Westphalia." (It could be other adjectives too.) This is a Germanism (ist eine größere Stadt). In English, you can only say it is bigger THAN something else. Use: Bielefeld is a **relatively/fairly large** town (or, in a more *informal* register, a **biggish** town). It is possible to say "Bielefeld is **one of the bigger cities** in East Westphalia-Lippe".

**LPT** ☹☹☹ both: the comma here is incorrect: ☹ \*both, my brother and I have green eyes. In ☺ "both my brother and I have green eyes", "both" means "sowohl als auch", not "beide".

☹ bring in order should be ☺ **put** in order.

☹☹☹ build is what you do with Lego blocks; you ☺ **get into** or ☺ **form** groups of three and you ☺ **make** sentences.

☹ calm: the weather or sea are ☺ calm; you might try to ☺ *calm* your frantic gerbil *down* if it gets overexcited: it helps if you have a ☺ calm, reassuring manner or experience a feeling of inner ☺ calm. People who do not talk a lot are not ☹ calm people: they are ☺ **quiet**.

☹ celebrate is not always an appropriate translation of "feiern". You do not ☹ \*celebrate parties/weddings. "Wir haben die ganze Nacht gefeiert", if it refers to a party rather than a victory celebration, is best translated as ☺ "The party went on all night", not ☹ "We celebrated all night." You *celebrate* a birthday, an anniversary or a victory.

**AE** ☹ chances as in ☹ "risks and chances": in English, the expression is "risks and **benefits**".

☹ colleague: a colleague is someone you work with; it cannot be used as a synonym for *classmate*, *friend* or *fellow student*. A **college** is an educational institution.

☹ colons: do not use colons in structures such as ☹ "The gerbil, or rather; the Clawed Jird, *Meriones unguiculatus*, is a popular pet". This is wrong: ☹ "The gerbil, or **better**: the Clawed Jird", and this is even worse: ☹ "or **better said**: the Clawed Jird". Write ☺ "The gerbil, or rather the Clawed Jird, *Meriones unguiculatus*, is a popular pet".

☹ Auntie Alligator also once remarked ☹: "Don't put a colon before direct speech. Use a comma instead."

**AE** ☹ coined, stamped or marked are often not appropriate translations of "geprägt von": try *influenced by* or *shaped by* instead. Instead of "Students' lives are ☹ *marked by* constant studying", use ☺ *dominated by* or a longer paraphrase - *A good deal of students' time is devoted to studying*. You *coin* a phrase and you *leave your stamp* or *mark* on Bielefeld University (intellectually, that is, and not with an Edding).

**AE, CE** ☹ come up: can be used in conversational English, as in ☺ "We were chatting about unusual sports last night, and the topic of bog snorkelling came up." The following use is not acceptable though: ☹ "New methods of teaching *came up* in the last twenty years." (Note that the **TENSE** is also wrong here!) It should be: ☺ "New methods of teaching *have emerged* in the last twenty years."

☹ comfortable: shoes and mattresses are *comfortable*. It is *convenient* to have good public transport in your area. A holiday apartment with an induction cooktop and a Jacuzzi is *luxurious*. A welcoming little hotel, pub or restaurant is *friendly/intimate/cosy/congenial/snug*.

**LPT** ☹ comma splices: it is considered sloppy to join two main clauses with a comma in formal writing in English: e.g. ☹ "Researchers at Brie University have discovered something surprising, they report that mice do not in fact like cheese." Here, a semi-colon would be better: "...surprising; they report that ...". Comma splices are often used effectively in creative writing, however: "The mouse stopped, sniffed the air, wondered what the yellow stuff under the piece of wire was."

**LPT** ☹ complements are *NOT* remarks like "Good morning, Captain Alligator! You are looking enchantingly green today!". They are far less pleasant. Typical complementation mistakes are ☹ "I enjoy **to go** bog snorkelling" instead of ☺ "I enjoy **going** bog snorkelling. (Going bog snorkelling in itself may be a mistake, of course.) See the [COMPLEMENTATION QUAGMIRE](#) at the end of Auntie Alligator's list for common complementation problems.

**LPT** CE ☹ concentrated (Adjective): in chemistry experiments at school, you may have used concentrated sulphuric acid (very, very carefully) – that is, you had to ☺ concentrate hard so as not to spill the nightmarish substance. But the acid was concentrated, not you. Instead of the adjective "concentrated", try phrases like these: *the children were absorbed in their game; everyone worked with great concentration; we gave the task our full attention*.

**AE** ☹☹☹☹ concerning: translate "in Bezug auf" as **as regards/with regard to/relating to/related to**, as appropriate. Often a simple preposition (e.g. on/with/about) is more idiomatic, however; instead of "There is a considerable amount of research concerning cognitive processes in language learning", for example, write "research **on** cognitive...".

"Concerning" is appropriate here: ☺ "I've had a phone-call from the police **concerning** your involvement in last week's Gerbil Liberation demonstration" and here: ☺ "Term papers **concerning** the behaviour of mice are unusual in literary studies, except in the area of children's literature".

This would be wrong: ☹ "Term papers *referring to* the behaviour of mice are unusual in literary studies, except ...".

**AE** ☹☹☹ conclusion: please do not conclude a piece of writing with the phrases "To come to a conclusion I can say there are many aspects of this problem" or "To reach a conclusion, I can say that...": or worst of all, "Concluding, I can say that..." Most readers notice when the words stop and realize the text has ended, but if you really need to, use these expressions: "*In conclusion, I would suggest that ...*" or "*To conclude, I would like to summarize ...*".

The phrases "to reach/come to/arrive at a conclusion" are used like this: "Although the data provided a great deal of information, the researchers were not able *to reach/come to/arrive at a conclusion* about the exact cause of ...".

☹ consequent: *\*teachers must be consequent* is a Germanism: German "konsequent" is translated as "**consistent**". You can use "consequently" or "as a consequence" as (formal) linking terms meaning "as a result": e.g. ☺ "In Germany, films on TV are always dubbed into German, and **consequently/as a consequence** German children are denied the opportunity to improve their English by hearing the original soundtrack".

☹ considerate means thoughtful and empathetic. Someone may be ☺ **conscious** or **aware** (not ☹ *considerate*) of cultural differences, of the importance of a healthy diet, of their own shortcomings, etc.

☹ contact: don't use ☹ "I would like to get in contact/make contact with South African students"; say "meet/get to know South African students". You ☺ **get in touch** with your bank/your old school friends; you ☺ **take up contact** with other gerbil enthusiasts; you ☺ **contact** the guy who sold you the cheap Campus Festival ticket, and discover he gave you a fake phone number.

☹ contain is sometimes confused with "consist": instead of ☹ "the list **contains** of common mistakes", write ☺ "the list **consists** of common mistakes" or ☺ "the list **contains** common mistakes".

**LPT AE** ☹ (on the) **contrary**: In English, "im Gegenteil" is expressed differently in different contexts. This is wrong: "Ground squirrels are active during the day. ☹ *On the contrary*, gerbils are night-active rodents." It should be ☺ "by contrast", "conversely" or "on the other hand". This is how to use "on the contrary". A friend says, "You loathe gerbils, don't you?" and you reply, rather formally, "I don't *loathe* them! ☺ **On the contrary** – I absolutely adore them!" ☹ "Contrary to most young men, Greg enjoys knitting" should be ☺ "Unlike most young men ..."

**CE** ☹☹ control: you ☺ **check** your spelling/the air-pressure in your tyres/that the gerbil has not gnawed through your computer cables. You ☺ **control** dogs/horses/aircraft/your temper, spending, impulses and irrational urges. Or at least you try.

**LPT AE** ☹ criteria is the plural of **criterion** – so ☹ "one important criteria" is incorrect.

☹ degree only means "Abschluss" if it refers to a ☺ university degree, as in "Applicants for the position should have completed a BA or Master's ☺ degree in Alligatorology". The *Abitur* (or any other school-leaving qualification) is NOT a ☹ "degree", nor is it a ☹ "graduation". As a general term (*not* specifically related to a particular education system) the expressions "school leaving certificate" or "school leaving exams" could be used.

Although *Abitur* is often translated as *A-Levels* by teachers, that term is only used in the UK and some of its former colonies to denote higher school-leaving exams. A-Levels are (in some respects) comparable to, but not identical with, the *Abitur*.

☹ delicate does not mean the same as "delicious". It is used in collocations such as *a delicate matter* (heikles Thema/heikle Angelegenheit); *a delicate state of health* (fragiler Gesundheitszustand); *a delicate touch* (Feingefühl, Fingerspitzengefühl) and *delicate lace* (zarte Spitze).

**AE** ☹☹ demand: ☹ "Most lecturers demand that papers should be typed in 11-point font" should probably be ☺ "Most lecturers **require** papers to be typed ...", unless the lecturer is habitually rude. Similarly, ☹ "How will teachers fulfil the demand to test their pupils' spoken English once a year?" should be ☺ "How will teachers fulfil the **requirement** to test ...".

**LPT** ☹ despite is followed directly by an NP (which may be an "-ing-form") and NOT by a "that" clause or "of"; "of" only occurs in the phrase "in spite of", which means exactly the same thing.

☺ *Despite* reading the alligator warnings, the foolish tourists cavorted blithely in the swamp.

☺ *In spite of* reading the alligator warnings, the foolish tourists cavorted blithely in the swamp.

**AE, CE** ☹ detailed is difficult to use in adverbial expressions. The adverb "detailedly" is rarely used and sounds clumsy. These are wrong: ☹ \**analyse it as detailed as possible* or ☹ \**explain it very detailed*. The phrases ☺ "in as much detail as possible" or "in a very detailed way" are better, but best of all, turn the verbs into nouns, as in ☺ *make a detailed **analysis*** or ☺ *give a very detailed **explanation***.

☹ different is inaccurate in "There are ☹ different indicators that suggest Bielefeld might not actually exist". It should be ☺ "various". In "Experts have expressed ☹ different opinions on Bielefeld's existence", ☺ "varying" or "differing" would be better.

**LPT** ☹ different from: ☹ "*Different from* his flatmates, Greg loved tinned ravioli" should be "*Unlike* his flatmates, Greg loved tinned ravioli".

**AE** ☹ due to may not be an appropriate substitute for "according to", "thanks to", "on account of (...ing)", "on the basis of" or "so". These are wrong:

☹ Due to some authors, the gerbil is a symbol of destruction. ☺ According to...

☹ Due to a theory developed by Fury (1964), researchers have developed a rodent-driven model of English grammar instruction. ☺ On the basis of...

☹ Fury's theory is confusing; due to this, it is seldom used. ☺ Fury's ... confusing, so it is seldom used.

☹ Due to the constant alligator references, some students avoid using the list. ☺ Some students avoid using the list because they are alarmed by the constant alligator references.

Use "due to" like this: ☺ Due to overcrowding, many students are forced to sit on top of other students in tiny seminar rooms.

☹ during/while: "during" is followed by a NP, not a clause: ☺ a gerbil got loose in the classroom *during the lesson* and caused pandemonium. "While" is followed by a clause: ☺ A gerbil got loose *while the teacher was explaining what copular verbs are*, and caused pandemonium. "During" can only be used with nouns that denote events that have duration, however. ☹ "During my Bachelor thesis I realized the topic didn't interest me" is odd-sounding.

**LPT** ☹ economical is a word that often occurs in advertisements: ☺ "*the most economical washing-powder on the market*"; ☺ "*an economical car that doesn't sacrifice performance*". This means you don't need much washing-powder to get your sheets **whiter than white** and that your car will use very little petrol. If the cafeteria is ☺ "economical with the butter", it means they didn't put enough on your baguette; ☺ if someone is "economical with the truth", it means they are not being completely truthful. If someone says ☹ "Germany's economical situation is getting worse", it means they need to work at their English. They should have said ☺ "economic", which is the adjective related to the *economy*.

**CE** ☹ education: education is provided by schools and universities. *Upbringing* or *bringing up children* ☺ takes place in the family. "Educating children is a challenge for parents" means parents face challenges finding the right schools for their children.

**CE** ☹ efforts: When you email Professor Fury (or anyone else, but especially Professor Fury) asking for a favour, don't end your email ☹ "Thank you for your efforts". Use "Thank you for your **help**" instead.

**LPT** ☹ emphasis is a noun and the plural is "emphases"; emphasize (-ise also possible in BrE) is a verb.

☹ "They emphasize *on* the importance of ..." is wrong. ☺ To place **emphasis** (noun) **on** something must not be confused with ☺ To **emphasize/emphasise** something (direct object, no "on"). And don't confuse "**empathize/empathise**" with "emphasize".

**CE** ☹ "the English language" can usually be referred to simply as "English".



☹ especially: don't start main clauses with "especially" ☹: "Especially students are vulnerable to theft and burglary." ☺ "Students in particular are vulnerable to ..." or: "Students are especially/particularly vulnerable ..." (but note that in the latter example, *vulnerable* rather than *students* is being modified, and the meaning is subtly different). "Especially" is usually used like this: "Students are vulnerable to theft, especially if they live in shared accommodation."

**LPT** ☹ excited is only a positive sensation in English. Anyone who says ☹ "I was so **excited** before Professor Fury's grammar test that I couldn't sleep," is either mad or should have used ☺ **nervous/worried/apprehensive/frightened/scared/anxious/upset/distressed/afraid**

☹ exist: instead of "there exist/s" use "there is/are"

**LPT** ☹☹☹ experience(s): you do not ☹☹☹\**make experiences* in English: you ☺ **have experience** in dealing with customers/creating spreadsheets. Note that "experience" is usually treated as a non-count noun, and is therefore singular. It is treated as a count noun if you talk about *individual* experiences, as in ☺ "I've had some good/bad/interesting/bizarre/unpleasant/off-putting/memorable experiences during my travels", OR ☺ "I had one or two strange experiences during my stay in Idaho/Botswana/Auntie Alligator's B&B". Whereas in German you *can* use the plural in "Ich habe schon Erfahrung[en] mit Wüstenspringmäusen gesammelt/gemacht", in English you can only use the singular: ☺ "I **have already had some experience** [NOT "**experiences**", unless they were weird ones] with gerbils" OR "I gained a good deal of **experience** with gerbils during my work placement in a pet-shop".

HOWEVER: where you would use "Erfahrung" in German, it is often best not to use the word "experience" in English at all. Instead of "I had good experiences in my internship", perhaps write "My internship was useful/interesting and instructive/inspiring/productive/very satisfying" instead. Depending on the context, the expression "ich habe die Erfahrung gemacht, dass ..." is sometimes better expressed in English as "I have noticed/realized that ..." or "In my experience, ...".

☹ familiar means "vertraut". A restaurant or café has a ☺*relaxed, informal or intimate* atmosphere – and maybe ☺*familiar* smells, sounds, sights and customers, if you spend a lot of time there.

☹ famous is not the same as "well-known". "*Bielefeld is a famous city in East Westphalia*" is both incorrect and untrue. We all know that Bielefeld doesn't actually exist.

☹ fantasy: don't say "the little girl had a powerful fantasy" if you mean "powerful **imagination**" (Vorstellungskraft, Fantasie); to have "a fantasy" about something means to fantasize about a particular scenario ("I have this fantasy about swimming in a pool full of champagne").

**LPT** ☹ in how far: German "inwieweit" is usually translated as "to what extent" or "how far" – although the awkward expression "in how far" is found sometimes in academic in English as well.

**LPT** ☹ feel like is misleading here: "There were mosquitoes everywhere, and I ☹felt like being eaten alive!", since "feel like" +NP means that you would like something: ☺ I feel like (having) an ice-cream/a nice cold beer, I feel like having a hot bath and going to bed early, I feel like going dancing tonight. In the case of the mosquitoes, it should be ☺ "I felt **as if I was being** eaten alive".

☹ find: this is awkward: ☹ "In the city centre, you **can find** shops selling almost anything you can imagine". Use "**there is/are**", e.g. ☺ "In the city centre, **there are** shops selling almost ..."

**AE** ☹️ find out: in formal and academic writing, use "find", not the phrasal verb "find out". "Researchers have found that mice do not like cheese." The phrasal verb "find out" is suitable in *informal* registers: "Hi Suzi! I just found out the English exam has been cancelled!"

☹️ fit (Verb) refers to clothes that are not too big or too small; they ☺️ fit the wearer well. Instead of "the tasks should be designed ☹️ \*to fit to the learners' needs" write ☺️ "the tasks should be designed to meet the learners' needs" or "the tasks should be appropriate/suitable/right for the learners".

**LPT** ☹️ for & since are both translated as "seit" in German. "Since" refers to a *point in time*, one which marks the beginning of a state, situation, circumstance or activity which is still continuing at the point of speaking/writing. The present perfect (simple or progressive) is normally used with "since".

"For" refers to the *period of time* something has been going on: either it is still happening (in which case the present perfect [simple or progressive] is used) or the period of time came to an end before the time of speaking (in which case the simple past is used).

Examples: ☺️ Captain Alligator *has been lurking* outside my window **since** I got home.

☺️ Captain Alligator *has been lurking* outside my window **for** over an hour.

☺️ Yesterday, Captain Alligator *lurked* outside my window **for** most of the afternoon.

☹️ former times: instead of ☹️ "in former times" use ☺️ "long ago"/"in earlier times"/"in past centuries"/"in the olden days"/"in our grandparents' days"/"in the 1960s" or "in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (or whenever it was).

**CE** ☹️☹️☹️ funny: ☹️ "It was a funny lesson/party/Karaoke evening" should be ☺️ "The lesson/party/K. evening **was (a lot of) fun**", unless you mean it was *peculiar*, as in "Professor Fury is in a funny mood again: stay out of his way", or you really mean it made you *laugh excessively*: "The video clips were so funny I almost fell off my chair laughing" (a lesson can be described as "funny" in this sense, but a party or Karaoke evening can only be *hilarious*). Other adjectives that may substitute for "funny" according to context are: amusing, enjoyable, entertaining, lively. "A fun party/a fun guy" are *informal* and the latter cannot be applied to Professor Fury anyway.

☹️ further is a relatively unusual, very formal discourse marker, and it means "in addition". Instead of ☹️ "The children colour in their drawings of monsters. Further, they think of names for them." write: ☺️ "The children colour in their drawings of monsters and [then] think of names for them."

☹️ furthermore: see "moreover"

**AE** ☹️☹️☹️ get: avoid using "get" when a form of BE or BECOME could be used, except in very *informal* contexts. e.g. ☹️ "Then Polonius gets killed by Hamlet; after this, Hamlet's conflicts get even stronger" may ☹️ get negatively received in a term paper.

☹️ get on with/get along with: ☺️ you *get on/along (well) with* your new flatmates or your boyfriend's parents (i.e. you have a good relationship with them). You ☺️ *get on with* your work (i.e. continue to do it) while your friends hold a pirate party in the kitchen; you don't ☹️ *get on with* problems; you ☺️ **cope** or **deal** with them. You ☺️ **manage** without a phone or internet connection for six weeks because you've changed providers. (Well, what choice have you got?)

**AE, CE** ☹️☹️☹️ given, as in "Gerbils are the main topic of the ☹️ given text". The teacher has, it is true, **given** you a text to discuss, but please simply write, "Gerbils are the main topic of the ☺️ text". English has no equivalent for "im vorliegenden Text" (see "mentioned" and "present" as well).

☹ graduation denotes completing university (as well as high school in the US) and is used in collocations or contexts such as: ☺ graduation ceremony/day, graduation ball, after graduation he took a year off to travel. Do not translate “graduation” as “Abschluss”, whatever those popular online dictionaries tell you. “Abschluss” (when related to education) could, according to the context, be translated as: (university) degree, qualification, school-leaving exam. However, there is often not a single noun phrase that will convey “Abschluss” accurately and idiomatically in English. Instead, consider using phrases like: after leaving school, after completing her education, after completing Year Ten, upper/lower secondary school certificate – etc.

☹ had to is incorrect here: ☹ “When I opened my wallet, I **had to discover** that I only had a few cents left.” The German expression “ich musste feststellen, dass” is often just not translatable; leave it out and say: ☺ “I discovered/realized/found that...”

☹ hand: when weighing up options, use ☺ “on the one hand ..., but on the other hand ...”, NOT ☹ “on the one *side* ....., but on the other *side*...”. To describe where things or people are, use ☺ “on the right-hand side/on the left-hand side”. The expressions ☹☹ “on the one hand side/on the other hand side” do not exist.

**CE** ☹ hand in (☺hand in your term paper to Professor Fury) does not mean the same as *hand out* um, handouts, to the whole class.

**LPT** ☹ having : see "being"

☹ headline: headlines are found in newspapers; ☺ **headings** and subheadings are used in academic papers.

☹ hectic is an adjective, not a noun, in English. ☹ “My first impression of the Uni was the hectic in the main hall” could be expressed as ☺ “As I entered the main hall, all I saw were **hectic students** scurrying around like demented gerbils.”

☹ high, as in ☹ “a high number of students have been bringing their pet rats to Professor Fury’s Monday morning lecture”. 42,377,983 is a **high number**. For the numerous rodent-owning students, try ☺ “a large number of students/a great many students/lots of students” instead.

☹ hints are handy bits of advice, as in ☺ “Helpful hints on building your own gerbil cage” OR pieces of (often awkward, delicate or unofficial) information given in an indirect way, as in ☺ “Professor Fury dropped some hints about the diabolically difficult exam he was going to set for his students”. “Hint” is not always an appropriate translation of “Hinweis”: more appropriate translations, depending on context, might be **sign, indication, suggestion, comment, reference** or **clue**. Instead of “The lack of major poems about gerbils in English may be a ☹ *hint* of general antipathy to rodents in the Anglophone world”, write ☺ “may be a *sign/indication* of ...”

**LPT CE** ☹ [on] holiday/s: the phrase ☹ “on holidays” is not acceptable, unless it refers to a number of holiday trips in general: e.g. ☺ We used to go **on package holidays**, but these days we prefer self-catering mule treks.

This is incorrect: “I will be going ☹ on holidays next week” or “We were all stung by jellyfish ☹ on holidays.” Here, it should be “on holiday”.

It is completely all right to use “holidays” in phrases like ☺ “school holidays”, ☺ “backpacking holidays”, ☺ “my childhood holidays”, etc. etc.

**LPT CE** ☹☹☹ homework: is non-count: don't write "homeworks" or "a homework"; *homework* is what you do to prepare for the next lesson or seminar; "eine Hausarbeit" is a **term paper/assignment/essay**.

**AE** ☹ hot air: In English, 'padding' is not considered good style. This kind of introduction or conclusion says very little: "*In my opinion concerning these points I can say that they are very interesting and there are many aspects that can be discussed regarding this widespread topic, since according to my point of view, there may be positive but also negative perspectives and advantages as well as disadvantages to be aware of when we consider all sides of these problems.*" Use a direct, clear, neutral style instead, e.g.: "*There are three main problems with regard to X. First, there is the question of ... . Second, the issue of ... is problematic. Third, many researchers believe that ... .*"

Note, too, that a term paper is not a "Besinnungsaufsatz" and excessive use of the first person and of personal opinion is inappropriate. Refer to authoritative sources to support your assertions. If you can't find any, hedge your assertions: e.g. "*There **seem** to be three main problems. First, gerbils **appear** not to care for cheese ...*" etc.

**LPT** ☹☹☹☹ \* "how it looks like" should be ☺ "WHAT it looks like" or ☺ "how it looks".

**LPT** ☹ if: there is usually no "will" or "would" in the "if" clause in conditional sentences. ☹ "If Suzi will be late, we will miss the start of the film." ☹ "If I would be able to afford it, I would move to Hamburg." ☹ "If I would have got your email, I would have done the homework."

☹ imagination: can't be used to translate "Vorstellung". Use "idea" instead, as in ☺ "Dr. Vulture's idea of an excellent term paper is one that cites her own publications extensively."

**LPT** ☹ **impressing** is the present participle of "to impress"; it cannot be used to translate "beeindruckend". Suitable translations, **depending on the context**, might include: impressive, remarkable, striking, noteworthy, exceptional, unusual, moving, arresting (etc.).

**LPT** ☹ **inevitable** does not mean the same as ☺ *essential* in constructions such as ☹ "getting enough sleep is inevitable for one's health".

**AE** ☹ **infer** does not mean "suggest/imply/insinuate/hint"; it means you *conclude* something from an implication or insinuation, e.g. ☺ "Professor Fury **hinted** that the students would only pass his test if they referred to 'appropriate sources'. Greg ☺ **inferred** that this meant Professor Fury's own book."

**LPT** ☹ **information**: is non-count: don't write "informations" or "an information". Don't use plural verbs or pronouns with non-count nouns.

**LPT** ☹ **irritate** if you mean "confuse". "Irritated" means "**genervt**" in German. So if you say, "Excuse me, Professor Fury, but I was irritated when you told us we have to hand in our work by Friday," you are not telling him you didn't understand clearly; you are telling him you are annoyed with him. This is never a good idea with Professor Fury.

**AE** ☹ **insight**: you ☺ **gain insight** into gerbil behaviour if you place a webcam in the middle of the gerbil nest and have a live feed 24/7. Your essay may ☺ **show great insight into** what motivates vegetarian vampires. But please avoid phrases like ☹☹ "Part One of my paper will *give a short insight into...*": Instead use ☺ **will (briefly) examine/describe/discuss/deal with**, depending on which is most appropriate. Instead of ☹☹ "My paper will give a *first insight into*" consider using ☺ **will give an introduction to/a brief impression of**.

**LPT AE** ☹️ "it is" are the words that ought precede formulations such as these: ☹️ *"\*Striking is that alligators don't like the taste of gerbils. ☹️ \*Noticeable is also that gerbils don't like the taste of alligators either."*

Instead, write ☺️ It is striking that alligators ... It is noticeable that ...

**LPT AE** ☹️ indispensable is the correct translation of "untentbehrlich" or "unverzichtbar" in formulations such as ☺️ "A tent is indispensable if you want to stay dry on a camping trip." But "essential", "crucial" or "vital" are sometimes more appropriate: ☺️ "It is essential/crucial/vital that all alligators are removed from the pool before the start of the swimming competition."

**LPT** ☹️ kind: A student passes Professor Fury in the corridor and says cheerily, "Hey Prof, howya doin'?" but Professor Fury just scowls with loathing and hurries on without a word. "Jeez," mutters the student. "He's not a very ☹️ kind man." The student should say that he is not a ☺️ **nice/friendly** man (and the student would be right). The adjective "kind" suggests exceptional consideration, gentleness and thoughtfulness. ("My battery was empty, but a ☺️ kind person lent me their phone so I could text you.")

☹️ know: In "I had a strange experience when I was five. ☹️ *You must know* that at that time we lived in a spooky old house in the forest, and ..." should be ☺️ **"I should explain** that we lived in a spooky old house ...".

**CE** ☹️ knowledge: you do not ☹️ *improve your English knowledge* or, worse still, *\*knowledges*. You simply ☺️ *improve your English*. "Knowledge" can be used like this, however: ☺️ *Greg's knowledge of Polish was too limited for him to make out what the police officer was shouting about.*


**AE** ☹️ last but not least, or worse still, last not least: use ☺️ **lastly/finally** in academic papers.

**LPT** ☹️☹️☹️☹️ lay is the past tense of *lie* (in the sense of not standing up, not telling untruths) in standard English – although you will often hear "lay" used as the present tense form in *non-standard English*, both in BrE and AmE ("*that ol' alligator just lays around next to the swamp all day*"). The verb "to lay" is used in collocations such as: lay an egg, lay down your weapons, lay down the law, lay the sleeping baby gently in its cradle.

**LPT** ☹️ lead vs. led: the simple past and past participle forms of the verb **to lead** /li:d/ are both **led** /led/, as in "We got lost in the mountains on holiday, but our dog led us back to our tent; she has often led us home in the past."

This is entirely logical: compare "to feed" but "fed yesterday/have often fed", "to read" but "read yesterday /have often read", "to mean" but "meant yesterday /have often meant", "to speak", but "spoke yesterday /have often spoken". Well no, it's not logical at all; it's total chaos. If I were you, I'd learn a language with far less history, like Afrikaans. Dit is nie moeilik nie.

**CE** ☹️ learn: one does not ☹️ *learn for a test*; one *studies/prepares/revises for a test* or, in informal BrE, *swots for a test*.

 dilettantish German-English online dictionaries patched together by whoever feels like flaunting their ignorance online: sometimes they are superb, sometimes execrable, so don't rely on them exclusively. Buy the biggest bilingual dictionary you can afford and use it together with a reputable monolingual learner's dictionary, online or in book form.

### *Auntie Alligator's Tip:*

Try the "gratuitous" test before you put your faith in any English-German dictionary, online or otherwise. If it gives "kostenlos" or "unentgeltlich" as the primary meaning of "gratuitous" without pointing out that this meaning is generally restricted to the domain of legal English or specific collocations in AmE (*gratuitous copy/service*), treat it with the greatest caution. The meaning of "gratuitous" in general English, and by far the more frequent meaning, is "überflüssig", "unnötig", "unerwünscht" or "grundlos": e.g., "*The film was marred by a great deal of gratuitous sex and violence*". Thus thanking someone for their "gratuitous help" may be deeply offensive. As you see, the test is anything but gratuitous.

**AE ☹ let:** Instead of ☹ "Shakespeare *lets* Julius Caesar die in Act III" or "Jane Austen *lets* her heroine achieve higher social status through her marriage", simply write ☺ "Caesar dies in Act III" or "Austen's heroine achieves higher social status through her marriage".

☹ **like/as:** in **formal English**, "like" is followed by an NP (noun phrase): e.g. ☺ *do it like this; his voice sounds like rusty bicycle brakes; Greg looks a bit like a gerbil himself*; "like" is **not** followed by a clause or a prepositional phrase:

☹ *do it like I do; his voice sounds like he's been eating scrap metal; Greg looks like a gerbil just bit him; at university, like at school, you have to do some preparation before class*. Use "as" or "as if" or change the structure to an NP: ☺ *his voice sounds as if he's been eating scrap metal; do it like me; at university, as at school, you have to ...*. NOTE again, though, that this only applies in **formal** contexts. Native speakers very frequently use "like" before clauses and prepositional phrases in spoken English, and you will certainly have heard it used like this, e.g. *Nobody loves you like I do*. In the Harry Potter books, "like" is used before clauses **like this was** the normal usage.

**LPT CE ☹ like (Verb):** instead of ☹ "Who likes to present their results first," say ☺ "Who **would like** to present their results first?" , if you are inviting a someone to do something instead of asking about their general preferences.

Similarly, "Do you like chocolate?" means "Do you enjoy eating chocolate?", whereas "Would you like some chocolate?" means you are offering someone some chocolate. (The German "Magst du Schokolade?" could mean either, and with that kind of confusion going on, Auntie Alligator sometimes wonders how German speakers ever get anything to eat at all.)

**LPT ☹ look after** means "take care of"; **look for** means "search for". If Gloria leaves her gerbil with Greg while she's away and Greg mentions that he looked *after* the gerbil for four days, he's a reliable gerbil-minder; if he says he looked *for* the gerbil for three days, he isn't.

**LPT ☹☹☹ look forward to/looking forward to:** is followed by an -ING form, NOT an infinitive: ☹ "I am looking forward to meet you" is WRONG: it has to be: ☺ "I am looking forward to **meeting** you". "*I look forward to meeting you*" is acceptable; it's more formal than "*am looking*".

**LPT CE ☹ look on** as in "Have you had a look on our tests yet, Professor Fury"? It should be "**look at**", and the speaker should know better than to ask Professor Fury about the tests.

☹☹☹ **loose** /lu:s/ is an adjective found in such collocations as *loose tooth, loose-fitting jacket, loose shoelace, he must have a screw loose*. The verb **lose** /lu:z/ and the noun **loser** have only one **o**.

☹ **manage:** ☹ "I don't know how to manage it" doesn't mean the same as ☺ "I don't know how to do it" or ☺ "I don't know how to go about it". But if the problem is lack of resources rather than knowledge, say ☺ "I don't know how I'll manage it" (wie ich es schaffen werde).

AE ☹ marked, conditioned or coined for "geprägt" , as in "Her mother wanted her to become a brain surgeon, so even at the age of eight, her life was ☹marked by constant studying" . Here, "her life was ☹dominated by constant studying" is more appropriate.

"Sie waren von der traumatischen Erfahrung mit der Wüstenspringmaus geprägt" could be translated as "they were ☹ seriously affected by their traumatic experience with ..."

LPT CE!!!!☹☹☹ mean (verb). The question ☹ "What means 'Wüstenspringmaus'?" is wrong on two counts:

1) it is bad grammar: it should be "what **does** 'XYZ' **mean**?"

2) it is bad logic: the speaker presumably knows what 'Wüstenspringmaus' means; it's the English translation they're asking about.

The question should be: ☹ "What's 'Wüstenspringmaus' in English?" (The answer, naturally, is "gerbil".)

☹ meet: it is more idiomatic to say "I'm seeing/visiting some friends at the weekend" than to say you are "meeting some friends". Use "meet" if you are referring to organising a place to meet: "I had arranged to meet my boyfriend outside the cinema".

LPT, AE, CE, ☹☹☹ mentioned: as in "This analysis focuses on characterization, setting and dialogue in Act III, Scene ii of *Gerbil Nights* by Gregory Jird. The ☹**mentioned elements** of the ☹**specified scene** will be examined in terms of their significance for the ☹**named play**." This seems to reflect German structures such as "*die genannten Elemente*" and "*die von mir gewählten Abschnitte*". In English, the reference in the second sentence is clear if you write: ☹ "These elements of the scene will be examined in terms of **their** significance for the play".

CE ☹ miss: ☹ "I miss a vocabulary" should be "I don't know what the word is" or "I don't know how to say this in English". Someone doesn't ☹ "miss experience in gerbil training"; they ☹ *lack* experience. "My hobby, wrestling with live alligators in icy mud, is strenuous, but I ☹ wouldn't want to miss it" should be ☹ "I couldn't do without it" or ☹ "I'd never give it up".

☹☹☹ moreover, furthermore: do not over-use "moreover" and "furthermore", which are only appropriate in formal registers of writing anyway. A simple **and** or a construction with **also/too/as well** is often more effective, e.g. ☹ "I have done three month-long teaching practicals **and** give private lessons" or ☹ "I did a three-week practical in a primary school last June, and I give private lessons to a ten-year-old pupil **as well**". If you do use "moreover" or "furthermore", only do so to add extra information to the topic already introduced, not to start a new topic.

☹☹☹ nature: "die Natur" is not usually translated as "the nature": idiomatic translations of "die Natur" depend on the context: e.g. I enjoy outdoor life/I love going for walks in the countryside/the children need to get outdoors and have some the fresh air/the beautiful natural surroundings of Bielefeld are a magnet for tourists/the beautiful countryside around Gütersloh attracted nearly 23 tourists last year.

☹ numbers: thousands and decimal points: commas and points are used differently in English and German when writing numbers as figures. In English, use a comma (or a space) to show thousands: e.g. fifty-six thousand, five hundred and sixty-six is 56,566 or 56 566. Points are used to show decimals: e.g. "pi is approximately 3.14159" (three POINT one four one five nine).

AE ☹ of: instead of ☹ "*King Lear* is a **play of** Shakespeare" or ☹ "*Girl with a Pearl Earring*, the famous **painting of** Vermeer", use ☹**by** Shakespeare/**by** Vermeer.

Instead of ☹ "I am a student **of** Bielefeld University", write "I am studying **at** Bielefeld University" – unless you really are an anthropologist and are studying Bielefeld University. Good luck.

**CE** Do not write "students ☹ of a sixth class ☹ of a German secondary school": write ☺ "students/pupils in Year Six (BrE)/Sixth Grade (AmE) at a German secondary school".

☹ "of course": in spoken English, "of course" is used like this:

A: "Do you think I could borrow your copy of *Auntie Alligator's List of Don'ts*? I left mine at home."

B: ☺ "Of course! Here you are."

"Of course" can't be used as "natürlich!" or "selbstverständlich!" would in the following:

A: "Do you like running/going to the movies/chocolate/bog snorkelling/gerbils?"

B: ☹☹ "Of course!" [This may signal 'isn't that obvious?' and sound indignant or a little rude.]

Better responses would be: ☺ "Oh, yes!"/"Very much!"/"Yes - very much!"/"I do!"/"Yes, I do!"/"Yes, I love it (them)!"

☹ one: The pronouns *his* and *he* in ☹ "When *one* buys *his* first gerbil, *he* finds *his* life changes utterly" would not be acceptable in formal writing. The only pronouns that can be used with "one" are more "one"s, as in ☺ "When *one* buys *one's* first gerbil, *one* finds *one's* life changes utterly". (Which, as Auntie Alligator would agree, sounds inane.) The pronoun "one" is more formal than the German pronoun "man"; so these might be better: ☺ "When you buy your first gerbil, you find your life changes utterly" or ☺ "When someone buys their first gerbil, they find their life changes utterly".

**LPT** ☹ (the) one: "My gerbil slept all day, but ☹\*the one/☹\*the ones of my brother was/were active and full of criminal energy" is not acceptable. In very formal English, you would write: ☺ "but *that* of my brother/*those* of my brother were...". Such formal English is usually inappropriate for gerbil anecdotes, however, so use ☺ "but my brother's was/my brother's were active...." instead.

☹ over: In German, when you talk about a whole range of things, you can say "da kann man alles von Gitarrensaiten über Wüstenspringmausfutter bis zu Handys kaufen". In BrE, there is no equivalent to the "über" part (unfortunately). Say: ☺ "They sell everything there - from guitar strings to gerbil food and mobile phones".

**LPT CE** ☹ overburdened, overloaded, overwhelmed, overcharged, overtaxed, overstrained?



Yes, me too - but whatever the dictionary says, these are likely to be clumsy translations for "**überfordert**". Depending on context, try formulations including phrases such as "too much (for)", "under too much pressure", "not coping with", "ask too

much of", "expect too much of", "too demanding for" "more than X can cope with", "put strain on" or "drain resources".

☹ overthink does not mean "rethink", "revise" or reconsider. It means to think too much, with negative effects.

☹ overweight is an adjective, not a noun: e.g. ☺ Captain Alligator **is** a little overweight or ☺ She is a somewhat overweight reptile, not ☹\*She has overweight.



**LPT** ☹☹☹ own (Adj. or Pronoun): you cannot have an article before "own"; i.e. **you**

**cannot say** ☹ "an own". Use a possessive as a determiner: your own, my own, their own, Suzi's own, the children's own, etc. "Sie hat ein eigenes Pferd" is ☺ "she's got her own horse"/She's got a horse of her own", **not** ☹ "\*she's got an own horse".



**CE ☹️ paint:** if you paint a picture in English, you use brushes and paints; if you use a pen, pencil, crayons or your iPad (with a drawing program), you ☺️ **DRAW** a picture. Unlike German “malen”, you can’t use “paint” in English if you mean “draw”.

**CE ☹️ pantomime:** a pantomime is a kind of musical comedy staged around Christmas-time – often by amateur performers - in the UK and some other English-speaking countries (but not the USA). To ☺️ **mime** something is to convey a meaning without speaking: e.g. Auntie Alligator mimed that she was hungry by pointing to her mouth and rubbing her stomach OR, Auntie Alligator used mime to show that she was hungry: she pointed ... ..

**CE ☹️ pass an exam/test:** is the opposite of “fail an exam/test”; it is not the same as **take an exam**. You say “I’m planning to take the proficiency test next semester” but “I hope I pass the exam, because I feel uncertain about some points of grammar”.

**LPT ☹️ persons:** the plural of “person” is normally **people**.

**AE ☹️ plea/plead:** in melodramatic works of fiction, characters may utter many pleas. They ☺️ **plead** for mercy, ☺️ **plead** their innocence or ☺️ **plead** for their lives. But academic writing is seldom melodramatic, so rather than ☹️ “Fury’s article *pleads for* more frequent testing of students and much stricter marking criteria”, write ☺️ “Fury’s article **calls for/advocates/suggests** more frequent testing of students...”.

**AE ☹️ point out** is too *informal* here: “In this paper some major parallels between Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Jird’s *Gerbil Nights* will be ☹️ **pointed out**”. Use **examined/explored/discussed/outlined/delineated** instead.

**LPT CE ☹️☹️☹️ possibility:** beware of always translating “Möglichkeit” as “possibility”. In many cases, **can/be able to/way** are more suitable: ☺️ “Man hat die Möglichkeit, in Ruhe einzukaufen während die Kinder im Haibecken tauchen - You **can** shop in peace while the children are diving in the shark tank.” You have the ☹️ *possibility to shop*” sounds awkward and unidiomatic. There are also other ☺️ **ways** [NOT possibilities!!!] to express *Möglichkeit* = Es gibt auch andere Möglichkeiten, *Möglichkeit* auszudrücken.

**AE ☹️ present** (see also “given”): ☹️ “In the present text, we learn that...” should be “In the text...”.

**AE ☹️ present** as in ☹️ “The central focus of *the present thesis* is ...”. In English, it’s sufficient to write ☺️ “The central focus of **this** paper/BA thesis is ...” or even, (\*gasp\*) ☺️ “The central focus of **my** paper/BA thesis is ...”. (See also “at hand”).

**LPT AE ☹️ principally** means “mainly”, not “in principle”.

Instead of: “I’d make some minor changes, but ☹️ **principally**, I think the entries in *Auntie Alligator’s List of Don’ts* reflect the most common misuses of English”, say “I’d make some minor changes, but ☺️ **in principle**, I think ...”.

**LPT AE ☹️ prove** means *beweisen*, not (*über*)*prüfen*. e.g. ☺️ “To **test** their loyalty, the king sets his courtiers various pointless tasks. ☺️ They **prove** their intelligence by deposing him and creating a republic.”

Note that *prove* is a verb, *proof* is a noun and *proove* is a spelling mistake.

**Research** does not ☹️ *prove* X; it ☺️ **shows/provides (strong) evidence/indicates/suggests** that X occurs/exists.

**LPT** ☹️ raise vs. rise: the sun/prices/taxes/flood-water/numbers of students ☺️ **rise/s**.

People can ☺️ **raise** prices/taxes/flags/the numbers of students admitted to Gerbil Studies, but they can't, of course, raise the sun or flood-water. "Rise" is an intransitive verb; it can't have an object. "Raise" is a transitive verb; it must have an object, and can be used in the passive voice.

**AE** ☹️ rather: the use of "rather" in the wrong position may be confusing: ☹️ "Students do not fall asleep in class due to lack of sleep caused by their wild social lives; *it is rather late nights studying* that cause fatigue." (The reader understands "rather late" as meaning "fairly late" at first glance.) Reformulate it as: ☺️ "...lives; **rather**, it is late nights studying that ...".

Also note the misuse of "rather" here:

☹️ "I hate mountain-biking in the rain; I'd rather like to stay at home and play video games" should be "**I'd like/prefer** to stay at home and play ... **instead**". ("rather like to" is acceptable here, but it means "quite like to", not "like to do X instead"). Instead of ☹️ "These days, children rather like to play computer games than read books", use "tend to prefer computer games to books" or "would rather play ...".

**LPT** ☹️ recognize when you mean **realize**: ☺️ "I didn't recognize you with that new haircut!" but: ☺️ "I **realized** that I would never be able to make money from rock music" (erkannt, festgestellt). This is wrong: ☹️ "I recognized that I needed to improve my grammar".

**LPT** ☹️ recognize when you mean **notice**: ☺️ "They noticed that the gerbil was happier when it wasn't being dressed up in its Super-Rodent costume every day" (erkannten).

**AE** ☹️ refer and its derivatives are frequently misused, as in

☹️ ☹️ "The main difference between the play *Gerbil Nights* and the film of the same name refers to the role of the gerbil." Here, *refers to* could be replaced by **lies in** or **is related to**.

☹️ ☹️ "The protagonist's perception that the gerbils are dangerous killers clearly refers to his emotionally unstable state of mind." Here, *refers to* should be **is clearly related to** or **can clearly be attributed to**.

☹️ ☹️ "The play will be discussed referring to its position in the canon of great rodent literature." Here, *referring to* should be **in terms of** or **with reference to**.

☹️ ☹️ "Term papers referring to the behaviour of mice are unusual in literary studies, except in the area of children's literature". Here, it should be **about/which focus on/focussing on/concerning**.

☹️ ☹️ "Referring to *Fury* (2004), Jird's *Gerbil Nights* is a 'torrid morass of animal rights polemics masquerading as a postmodern meditation on the rodent condition' (743)." Here, **referring to** should be **according to**; the rest is complete rubbish.

**LPT** ☹️ refuse vs. reject: as both words may be translated as "ablehnen", they may be used incorrectly.

you ☺️ **reject** an argument, proposal, plea or claim (NOT "refuse"), i.e. you don't accept them;

you ☺️ **refuse** permission, a demand or a request.

But sometimes they can be used interchangeably: You **refuse** or **reject** an offer to join Captain Alligator's Ukulele Ensemble. How confusing.



☹️ relation: *relations* are people like your granny and  aunties. ☺️ You have a

good/bad/difficult/business/friendly/intimate/sexual/destructive ☺️ **relationship** with another person.

☺️ *Relations* between two countries may be *strained* if one violates the other's airspace or defeats them at football or cricket.

**LPT** ☹️☹️☹️ relative clauses: a defining relative clause has NO comma before (and, if it occurs in the middle of the main clause, after) it. Its function is to tell you *which* member of a group or category you are referring to: e.g. **students of English who have a good command of grammar will find the test**

**easy** (no commas: only those students of English who have a good command of grammar will find the test easy; the others will find it difficult). A non-defining relative clause is marked by commas, which act like brackets: I could also have written "*is marked by commas (which act like brackets)*" here. It is not true that non-defining relative clauses "do not contain important information"; they contain *further* information, which may be extremely important: e.g. **our students of English, who have a perfect command of grammar, will find the test easy**. This tells you a) that all our students of English have a perfect command of grammar, and b) that all our students of English will find the test easy. The terms "restrictive/non-restrictive relative clauses" and "identifying/non-identifying relative clauses" mean the same thing as "defining and non-defining relative clauses".

**LPT AE** ☹️ research (Noun): usually non-count: avoid using "researches" or "\*a research".

**AE** ☹️ respective(ly) is used like this: *Greg and Gail-Anne own a gerbil and a turtle ☺️respectively*. That is, Greg owns a gerbil and Gail-Anne owns a turtle. ☺️ *Every week they get bitten while cleaning out the cage or tank of their ☺️respective pets*. That is, Greg gets bitten by the gerbil whilst cleaning out its cage and Gail-Anne gets bitten by the turtle whilst cleaning out its tank. Respective(ly) is NOT used like this: *Greg is thinking of getting a rabbit ☹️**respectively** a guinea-pig to keep his gerbil company*. Here, use ☺️"or else".

☹️ sadly is often not the appropriate translation of "leider". Only use it if something is genuinely sad, as in "sadly, numbers of wild birds are decreasing steadily". Instead of "Dear Dr. Vulture,

☹️Sadly, I will not be able to give my presentation today," write ☺️ "Unfortunately". (Dr. Vulture, for her part, will be feeling furious rather than sad at this point.)

☹️ scenery is a non-count noun and should not be confused with "scenario" or "scene". The differences are complicated to explain and Auntie Alligator is lazy, so look them up in a serious dictionary.

**AE** ☹️☹️ scientist: in English, "scientist" means a natural scientist. "Wissenschaftler/in", if it means a person who works and teaches at a university, could be translated as "researcher", "expert", "academic" or "university teacher", depending on the context.

*Examples: "Education experts have suggested that children may prefer playing computer games to doing homework."*

*"Researchers have found that gerbils allowed to run free may gnaw through computer cables."*

*"Professor Fury's career as a university teacher has spanned three apoplectic decades"*.

In news reports, "Medienwissenschaftler/in", "Bildungswissenschaftler/in" etc. are best translated as "media/education expert" or "expert on media/education" (not ☹️ "expert of ..."). "Akademiker" is translated as "(university) graduate". "Literaturwissenschaft" is "literary studies" (not "science").

☹️ self-conscious may look like the translation of "selbstbewusst" – but in fact it means the opposite. The adjective "selbstbewusst" can be translated as ☺️ "self-confident" or "self-assured". "Self-conscious" means shy and embarrassed. Notice the use in this authentic example from a teen advice website: "Don't feel self-conscious if you wake up one morning and find you've turned bright green. Just dump your human friends and hang out with alligators - you'll quickly regain your self-confidence."

**LPT** ☹️ self-evident is not always an appropriate translation of "selbstverständlich". Instead of ☹️ "Nowadays, good Internet connections are self-evident", try "Nowadays, we take good Internet

connections for granted" or "we expect to have good Internet connections". "Self-evident" often collocates with *reasons, truth(s), purposes, benefits, dangers* and *conclusions*.

☹ several is inappropriate in ☹ "there are several delicious toppings you can put on pizzas": **a variety of/ numerous/various/ a (vast) number of** are better here. ("Several" suggests a rather limited number.)

**LPT** ☹ shadow: on a hot day, you sit in the cool ☺ shade [not ☹ shadow] of a huge old tree. The fire casts strange ☹ shadows on the wall.

**LPT CE** ☹☹ shall (as a translation for "sollen"): Instead of ☹ "Children shall get enough fresh air and exercise", use "Children should get/need plenty of fresh...". "Shall" is ONLY used with "I" or "we", and sounds formal unless you are making an offer ("Shall I open the window?"). Otherwise, use "will". Instead of ☹ "The programme shall allow students to have better insights into gerbil psychology", use ☺ "The aim/goal/purpose of the programme is to give students better insights into gerbil psychology" (we all know, however, that gerbil psychology is deeply enigmatic).

**AE** ☹ short sentences: ☹ Long sentences are bad. They are typically German. English sentences are short. You learnt this at school. But it's not true. ☺ It is not only acceptable to have several clauses in one sentence, it is also necessary if you want to avoid sounding like a storybook for two-year-olds.

**LPT AE** ☹ shortly if you mean "briefly". ☹ "First, I will shortly describe alligator-gerbil interactions in the wild" should be ☺ "briefly describe ..." (alas, such interactions *are* extremely brief). "Shortly" means "(within) a short time": e.g. ☺ the train will be here shortly; I spoke to her shortly before she was abducted by aliens; bad news - Professor Fury will be arriving shortly.

**LPT** ☹ should (as a translation for "sollen"): Instead of ☹ "The new computer system at the university should be very unreliable", use ☺ "They say/I've heard that the new computer system at the university is very unreliable" or "The new computer system at the u. **is supposed to be/is said to be** very unreliable".

☹ so: Don't write ☹ "I had always liked animals. \*So, I decided to study veterinary medicine". There is no comma after "so", because it does not mean the same as German "*also*". This is better: ☺ "I had always liked animals, so I decided ..."

☹ so: "Why are there so big differences between hamsters and gerbils?" should be ☺ SUCH big differences.

☹ somehow when you mean "fairly", "relatively" or "somewhat", as in ☹ "It was **somewhat** strange to find myself partnered with Professor Fury in the Scottish dancing class". In informal German, both *somehow* and *somewhat* could be translated as "irgendwie". "Somehow" means "in a way that is not quite clear or expected", as in ☺ "Somehow the gerbil managed to escape from the alligator, and somehow it ended up a TV celebrity."

☹ someone is incorrect in: "Can **someone of you** give me some advice?" Instead, write ☺ "Can **someone** give me some advice?" or "Can **one of you** give me some advice?" Or, in a tone of rising desperation, "Can **anyone** give me some advice?"

**LPT** ☹ special is the wrong word here: ☹ "Professor Fury tears up students' assignments unless they have been written in a special font and the margins are a special width". The word should be "**specific**".

**Special** is used for example in these collocations: ☺ special surprise, special wish, special treatment, special friend, special hiding-place, special delivery, special educational needs ... etc. etc.

☹ sportive: instead of "Greg is not very sportive", use "Greg is not very **good at/interested in sport**" ("sport" is preferable to "sports" - but cf: "He particularly loathes **sports** such as bog snorkelling and underwater rugby").

☹ stamped: see "coined"

**AE** ☹☹ study (Noun) is not the translation of *Studium*. You ☺ **do, take, have, or complete a degree** in English. You ☺ **do, make or undertake** a study (Untersuchung) of gerbil behaviour or alligators in 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature.

The noun "study" also means *Arbeitszimmer*, leading to confusion in: "The 27 fully-grown alligators observed in my study displayed voracious feeding habits."

☹ stuff does **NOT** mean "material" or "subject matter" (German *Stoff*), and it most certainly does **NOT** mean the teachers at a school or employees of a company: they are the ☺ **staff**.

"Stuff" is a useful *informal* placeholder word used to avoid going into detail, or just when you've forgotten all that ☺ stuff that you were going to.... uh .... (cf. German *Zeug*).

☹ substitute : In the sentence "Chocolate chip cookies can easily be ☹ substituted by raw carrots for a healthier diet", *substituted* should be ☺ replaced with **replaced with** or **replaced by**. Conversely, ☺ "Health-conscious people will find that raw carrots can easily be **substituted for** chocolate chip cookies". (Grammatically correct, but not true.)

☹ surrounding is an adjective, as in ☺ "*Bielefeld and **surrounding areas** offer plentiful opportunities for bog snorkelling*". "Surrounding" doesn't mean *Umgebung*, but "surroundings" (plural only) sometimes does, and can be used in constructions such as ☺ "The Sparrenburg and its **surroundings** are infested with blood-crazed vampires". (This is just a meaningless sentence designed to illustrate a point of usage. Put down that stake and stop whimpering.) Write ☺ "there are not many vampires in my neighbourhood/in the area I live in" and ☺ "there were a number of vampires among her friends and acquaintances", NOT ☹ "\*in her social surrounding/s".

**LPT** ☹ technique is pronounced /tek'ni:k/, and does NOT mean ☺ **technology** (*die Technik*). A technique is a (skilled) way of doing something – e.g. "His guitar-playing ☺ technique is unique: he tunes the instrument to G# and thumps the strings with an old running-shoe".

**LPT** ☹☹☹☹ that: **there is no comma before the relative pronoun or conjunction "that"**. ☹\***People, that** do that, ought to **know, that** that is wrong. ☹\*This **means, you** mustn't use a comma even when the "that" has been omitted.

☹ the time: ☹ "I hope you are enjoying the time in Bielefeld" is a Germanism. Use: ☺ "enjoying yourself/your stay/holiday/year abroad" etc. (Similarly, ☺ "I enjoyed myself/my stay/my holiday/my au pair year in Ireland".)

**LPT** ☹☹ there: you cannot use any verb you like after "there": the following are NOT idiomatic: ☹ \*there arrive many new students every year; \*there hang some abstract paintings on the wall; \*there sit three old men in the corner. "There" is almost always followed by a form of the verb BE. "There exist" is very unusual; don't use it.

**AE** ☹☹☹ therefore: do not over-use "therefore"; it is suitable for use in formal and academic writing, but even there can often be replaced by "**so**", "**and**", "**and so**", "**for this/that reason**", "**as a result**", "**this means/meant**", "**that means/meant**". This is unidiomatic ☹: "Dear Professor Fury, My gerbil wasn't well yesterday and had to go to the vet. Therefore I couldn't come to class." This is much more natural: ☺ "Dear Professor Fury, My gerbil wasn't well yesterday and had to go to the vet, so I couldn't ...". Instead of a construction with "therefore", always consider whether the information couldn't be expressed in reverse order using **because/as/since**, as in: "I couldn't come **because** the gerbil was sick". In very formal writing, "**accordingly**" can be used as a synonym for "therefore".

**LPT** Also note that "therefore" is NOT a translation of "dafür".

☹ this/that: (determiners or demonstrative pronouns) Using "this" instead of "that" may focus too strongly on something fairly irrelevant and distant from the speaker in time and space. ☹ "The pet-shop has stopped selling **that** cheap gerbil food." ☹☹☹ "Oh! \***This** is a pity. I'm sorry about **this**, because my gerbil loved **this** brand of food."

Conversely, using "that" or "those" when the referent is under discussion and has just been mentioned may be unidiomatic, because they have a distancing effect: e.g., ☹ "The pupils drew pictures of aliens, and those were displayed in the classroom" should be ☺ "these were displayed".

**LPT** ☹☹☹ time: ☹ \*in the last time/in the last weeks/in the next time/in the next weeks are Germanisms: "in der letzten Zeit/in den letzten Wochen" should be translated as "recently" or "in the past (or last) 6 weeks" or "in recent weeks"; in der nächsten Zeit/den nächsten Wochen is "in the near future/in the coming weeks".

☹ times of: the phrase "in times of" collocates with ☺ **crisis, trouble, war, drought, emergency, sorrow, uncertainty, need**, etc. Clearly these are not nice times. Please avoid ☹ "in times of globalization" - it should be ☺ "in today's globalized world" or ☺ "in the current era of globalization".

**LPT** ☹ "in times of corona" should be ☺ "**during the coronavirus pandemic**".

**AE** ☹ too: "it doesn't play ☹ \*a too important role" or "it doesn't have ☹ \*a too significant effect" should be

☺ "it doesn't play **too important a role**" and "it doesn't have ☺ **too significant an effect**". (Yes! Really! Trust Auntie Alligator!)

☹ touristic: the word exists, but Auntie Alligator forbids you to use it. Instead of ☹ "Gütersloh is not very touristic", write ☺ "Gütersloh does not have many tourist attractions" or "does not attract many tourists".

**LPT** ☹☹☹ until and by both translate as "bis" in German, but are not interchangeable in English. Compare ☺ "You can play with the alligator **until** it's time for your bath, darling" and ☺ "Please make sure all the monsters have been fed **by** sunrise [NOT☹ \*have been fed until sunrise]. "Until" focuses on a *period of time* ending at a specified point; "by" focuses on the *point in time* by which something has to have been done.

☹ until today is best expressed with "still", unless it designates a day

**LPT** ☹☹☹ used to: 1) "**to be used to**" (gewöhnt sein) is followed by an **-ING** form, NOT an infinitive: ☹ "\*I am used to work with Word and Excel" is WRONG: it has to be: ☺ "I am used to **working** with ...".

**LPT** 2) "**used to**" (habe früher, aber jetzt nicht mehr) IS followed by an infinitive. It means you did something at one time, but now you no longer do it: e.g. ☺ "I used to **write** Christmas cards every year,

but now I just send Christmas emails". Note that "used to" and "am used to" do not mean "usually" (in der Regel/ normalerweise); e.g. I usually have breakfast cereal for lunch.

**AE ☹️ view:** ☹️ "views on childhood in Shakespeare's time" should be ☺️ "**view of**" (=beliefs about/understanding of); "view on" is correct if it refers to personal opinions on something, as in "Professor Fury spent most of the lecture telling us ☺️ his **views on** the traffic in Bielefeld."

**CE ☹️ visit:** you visit your granny at Christmas; you ☺️ **attend** (formal)/**go to** a lecture, a seminar, a class, a school.

☹️ **vivid:** instead of "Students always enjoy Professor Fury's ☹️ vivid arguments and ☹️ vivid teaching", say ☺️ "lively arguments" and ☺️ "lively teaching". (Of course, Professor Fury's teaching is deathly dull, so the speaker has a ☺️ vivid imagination.) Other common collocations with "vivid" are ☺️ vivid green, vivid colours, vivid description.

**LPT CE ☹️☹️☹️ vocabulary** is a non-count noun, except when used as a specialist term. **A language learner does NOT ☹️ "learn vocabularies" – she "learns ☺️ new words"**. As a result of her hard work, she will soon have ☺️ **a large vocabulary** (Wortschatz). A less diligent learner does not ☹️ "miss/lack a vocabulary"; she ☺️ "doesn't know a word" or "doesn't know what *Wüstenspringmaus* is in English" / "doesn't know how to say *Wüstenspringmaus* in English".

**LPT ☹️☹️ way:** do not use "in a ... [adjective] way" - e.g. ☹️ "The garage repaired the car in a bad way" - when you could use an adverb: ☺️ "The garage repaired the car badly": the structure "in a ... way/manner" is only necessary and idiomatic when an adverb cannot be formed from an adjective because it ends in -ly (e.g. adjectives such as friendly, lovely, silly, deadly, costly, cowardly, lively, lonely, ugly, unlikely, leisurely). Instead of "speak more native-like" or "organise the lesson less teacher-focussed" use "in a more native-like way"; "in a less teacher-focussed way".

☹️ **what's about** should be ☺️ "what about".

**AE ☹️ whereas** cannot always be used like "although". Instead of ☹️ "Whereas hamsters are often bought as pets for children, they are not really suitable playmates for youngsters", write ☺️ "Although hamsters are often bought as pets, they are not really suitable playmates for youngsters" or ☺️ "Gerbils are good pets for children, whereas hamsters are not."

**LPT ☹️ who** cannot function as the subject here: ☹️ "Who grows up in a big family learns to fight. It should be ☺️ Anyone who grows...or ☺️ A person/child/individual who grows ...

**AE ☹️ within** does not mean the same as "in", and is only used in contexts such as: ☺️ within a certain period of time, play within a play, within the rules/ a particular framework; "innerhalb" is usually best translated as ☺️ "in".

**LPT AE ☹️☹️ work (Noun):** is non-count: don't write "works" or "a work", except in the sense of "a work of literature/art". A "Bachelor-Arbeit" is a "**BA thesis**". BA theses don't exist in English-speaking countries; there, postgraduate students write Master's theses or doctoral/PhD theses. "Eine Hausarbeit" is a "**term paper**" or "**assignment**" (often also referred to informally as an "**essay**").

**AE ☹️ work out:** you *work out* how much a weekend in Berlin would cost you. In a term paper, you **analyse/discuss/explore/investigate/address** the significance of the gerbil as an illustrative element in contemporary grammar instruction.

**LPT** ☹☹☹ would is wrong in this imaginary report of students' experiences: ☹ "Many first-semester students were shocked after their first week of lectures. They said lecture rooms **would be** overcrowded, the lifts **would be** incredibly slow and the pasta in the canteen **would be** limp and soggy." In German "wären" would be used to show their views were being reported, but in English the conditional cannot be used to express this. You have to rely on the reporting verbs (said, complained, reported) to show it is a report:

☹ "They said lecture rooms **were** ... the lifts **were**... the pasta **was**..." [The past tense is used because the reporting verb is in the past, not because the pasta, lifts etc. have since improved.]

**AE, CE** ☹ writings refers to the various texts produced by a famous person or a group of people, as in "The collected writings of Hugh Fury reveal a suspicious, vindictive personality". The texts you produce are your ☹ **writing**.

☹ written: as in ☹ "it is written on the sign" or ☹ "it stands on the sign". Confusingly enough, in English, signs, warnings, notes and nameplates ☹ "**say**" things, as in "The sign **said**, 'It is an offense punishable by a fine of up to \$500 to harass, disturb, trap, catch, confine, possess, feed or offer food to an alligator'." Note that this sign speaks American English. (Similar signs in Britain say "offence" and "£".)

☹ years: Instead of \*I am 19 years, say **I am 19** or **I am 19 years OLD**

☹ **CE** yes, please is the appropriate answer to "Would you like something to drink?" If a pupil puts up their hand in the classroom, an English-speaking teacher says "Yes?" or, if they happen to remember the kid's name, "Yes, Kyle?"

## NON-COUNT CORNER

**All of this is relevant for the LPT**

**These are NOT count nouns in English: they CANNOT be used with the indefinite article (e.g. \*an information) and they CANNOT be used in the plural (e.g. \*many informations). Be careful that you don't make these nouns singular and then use plural verbs or pronouns with them, as in:** ☹ The information on course participation which Professor Fury handed out \*were confusing and none of the students really understood \*them.

☹☹ advice is non-count: don't write "advices" or "an advice"; the verb is "advise" in both BrE and AmE.

☹ aggression is non-count; it sounds odd, if understandable, to talk of your ☹ "aggressions".

☹ behaviour is a non-count noun, except in a scientific context.



☹ experiences: you do not \**make experiences* in English: you **have experience** (normally NON-COUNT, and therefore SINGULAR) in dealing with customers/creating spreadsheets. You *can* say "I had one or two strange experiences during my stay in Idaho/Botswana/Auntie Alligator's B&B".

☹ feedback is non-count. You cannot ☹ "get a feedback" or "feedbacks", only **some feedback**.

☹ fruit, in the everyday sense, is non-count, as in: ☺ **Fruit is** so expensive in the winter months! We'll have **some fruit** for dessert. I buy **fruit** every week, but **it** just **rots** in the bowl.  
In specialist contexts (cookery, botany, nutrition), "fruit" is a count noun.

☹☹ homework: is non-count: don't write "homeworks" or "a homework"; *homework* is what you do to prepare for the next lesson or seminar; "eine Hausarbeit" is a **term paper/assignment** (often also referred to informally as an "**essay**" in English-speaking countries other than the USA).

☹ information: is non-count: don't write "\*\*informations" or "\*\*an information"

☹ research (Noun): usually non-count: avoid using "researches" or "\*\*a research".

☹ training, not ☹ trainings.

☹☹ work (Noun): is non-count: don't write "works" or "a work", except in the sense of "a work of literature/art". A "Bachelor-Arbeit" is a "**BA thesis**". BA theses don't exist in English-speaking countries; there, postgraduate students write Master's theses or doctoral/PhD theses. "Eine Hausarbeit" is a "**term paper**" or "**assignment**" (often also referred to informally as an "**essay**").

☹ writing – whether it refers to actual texts or a skill - is always non-count, unless you are famous and someone has collected your **writings** so that admirers can have a glimpse of your great mind.

## COMPLEMENTATION QUAGMIRE

All of this is relevant for the LPT

**appreciate**: *WRONG* ☹ I'd **appreciate to have** fewer gerbil cages in the flat, Greg.

RIGHT! ☺ I'd **appreciate having** fewer gerbil cages in the flat, Greg.

RIGHT! ☺ I'd **appreciate it if we had** fewer gerbil cages in the flat, Greg.

**consider**: *WRONG* ☹ When Dr. Strong left school, she first **considered to study** classical Greek, but soon discovered she preferred Economics.

RIGHT! ☺ **considered studying**

**criticise**: *WRONG* ☹ some commentators have **criticised that** the film **is** too long.

RIGHT! ☺ some commentators have **criticised** the film **for being** too long/for its length; have **criticised** the film's length

**difficulty** or **difficulties** *WRONG* ☹ we had **difficulties** to remove the alligator.

RIGHT! ☺ we had **difficulties (in) removing** the alligator.

**discuss:** WRONG ☹ then we **discussed about** our findings.

RIGHT! ☺ then we **discussed** our findings

**first time:** WRONG ☹ It's **my first time to mix** cocktails.

RIGHT! ☺ It's **the first time I've mixed** cocktails.

RIGHT! ☺ It's my **first attempt to mix** cocktails.

**help:** WRONG ☹ Can you **help finding** my pet snake? It's lost.

RIGHT! ☺ Can you help (me) **(to) find** my pet snake?

With *seek/ask for/request* help, use "in finding": ☺ A woman who **sought help in finding** her pet python was initially suspected of being on drugs by the police officer she approached.

**imagine:** WRONG ☹ Can you **imagine to live** in a world without social networking?

RIGHT! ☺ Can you **imagine living** in a world without social networking?

**interested:** WRONG ☹ I'm **interested to try** the Caveman Diet sometime.

RIGHT! ☺ I'm **interested in trying** ... .

RIGHT! ☺ I was **interested to hear/learn/find** (that) the diet does not include beetles or frogs.

**it:** WRONG ☹ Granny **enjoys it to watch** nature documentaries about wild gerbils on TV.

RIGHT! ☺ Granny enjoys **watching** nature documentaries about wild gerbils on TV.

However, it is correct in: ☺ Granny **enjoys it when** there's a nature documentary about ... or

☺ Granny **enjoys it when** she can watch a nature documentary about ...

Similarly, none of these verbs: **like, love, hate, prefer** can be followed by ☹ *it*+infinitive; but they ☺ can all be used with "*it when*"

**look forward to:** WRONG ☹ I'm **looking forward to hear** more about your research, Professor Fury.

(Not just wrong grammar, but deeply untruthful.)

RIGHT! ☺ I'm looking forward **to hearing** more ...

Also RIGHT! ☺ **I look forward to hearing** more ... (formal)

**mean:** WRONG ☹ Caring for a gerbil means **to take** on rewarding new responsibilities

RIGHT! ☺ Caring for a gerbil means **taking** on etc. etc.

**miss:** WRONG ☹ We **misted to** see the eclipse because of the clouds.

RIGHT! ☺ We **misted (seeing)** the eclipse because of the clouds.

**prevent:** WRONG ☹ The conductor **prevented that** I could take my pet alligator on the train.

WRONG ☹ The conductor **prevented me to take** my alligator on the train.

RIGHT! ☺ The conductor **prevented me from taking** my a. on the train.

**problem:** WRONG ☹ We had **a problem to convince** Greg to come bog snorkelling.

RIGHT! ☺ We had a problem **convincing** Greg to come bog snorkelling.

RIGHT! ☺ **It was a problem to convince** Greg *OR* convincing Greg.

**problem(s):** WRONG ☹ I have a **problem to read** Professor Fury's handwriting.

RIGHT! ☺ I have a **problem (with) reading** Professor Fury's handwriting.

**reason:** WRONG ☹ The **reason for us not to swim in the lake was** that it was just too cold - it had nothing to do with the legend of the monster.

RIGHT! ☺ Our **reason for not swimming in the lake** was that it was just too cold.

RIGHT! ☺ The **reason why we didn't swim in the lake** was that it was just too cold.

**reasons:** WRONG ☹ We didn't swim in the lake **because of two reasons:** the water was freezing and it was full of slimy water-weeds.

RIGHT! ☺ We didn't swim in the lake **for two reasons:** the water was freezing and it was full of slimy water-weeds.

RIGHT! ☺ We didn't swim in the lake **because of** the freezing water and the slimy water-weeds.

**refuse:** WRONG ☹ They **refused me to** take my pet alligator on the train.

RIGHT! ☺ They refused **to let me**

**responsible:** WRONG ☹ When I was in Year Five, I was **responsible to clean** the gerbils' cage.

RIGHT! ☺ responsible for cleaning

**risk:** WRONG ☹ One **risks to** lower pupils' motivation if one doesn't include numerous gerbils in the grammar exercises.

RIGHT! ☺ risks **lowering**

**suggest:**

WRONG ☹☹☹ They **suggested me to** take up bog snorkelling; or ☹ \* **suggested to** take up bog snorkelling

RIGHT! ☺ They suggested (that) I take up bog snorkelling OR ☺ suggested taking up bog snorkelling

**stop:** WRONG ☹ I wish you'd **stop to** criticise me all the time!

RIGHT! ☺ I wish you'd **stop criticising** me (stop = aufhören)

RIGHT! ☺ Half way up the mountain, we **stopped to** admire the magnificent view (stop = anhalten)

**used to:** WRONG ☹ I'll help you move your washing machine - **I'm used to carry** heavy loads.

RIGHT! ☺ I'm **used to carrying** heavy loads (ich bin daran gewöhnt)

**task:** WRONG ☹ We were given the **task to prepare** Captain Alligator's afternoon snack.

RIGHT! ☺ **task of preparing**

WRONG [collocation, not complement in this case] ☹ We tried to **\*solve the task** Professor Fury had set us, but it was impossible.

RIGHT! ☺ **perform/carry out/do/complete** the task

**worth:** WRONG ☹ Greg decided it wasn't **worth to get up** for Professor Fury's 8a.m. lecture.

RIGHT! ☺ worth **getting up**

RIGHT! ☺ worth **it to get up**

## DEVOICING DEN

All of this is relevant for the LPT

Beware of lexical, grammatical and spelling mistakes that might originate from devoicing final voiced consonants when *speaking*. Some commonly confused words are:

afford – effort

believe(s)-belief(s)

broad - brought

build – built

seized - ceased

contend - content

crab – cr\*p (vulgar synonym for excrement that Auntie Alligator would never actually use)

extend (V)-extent (N)

gab – gap (as in ☹\*fill the gabs)

inside – insight

intend - intent

lab - lap (as in \*laptop computer)

leaves (not ☹\*leafs)- leaf

live (Adj., as in live performance, live frogs) - life

lose-loose (to lose a bet; a loose shoelace, a loose tooth)

pad - pat

prove-proof

rugsag [a reference to the state of a newly-washed rug sagging on the washing-line??]- rucksack

send – sent

side- site (as in ☹\*websiteside)

slid - slit

spend-spent

these-**this** (as in ☹\*this words are often devoiced)

theses-thesis /'θi:si:z/ - /'θi:sis/

thread - threat

tread – treat /tred/, tri:t/

## COLLOCATION CACHE

All of this is relevant for the LPT

**arouse:** WRONG ☹ \*their anger aroused. It should be Their anger *arose* (past tense of the intransitive verb *arise*) OR their anger *was aroused*.

RIGHT! ☺ You *arouse* somebody's suspicion, interest, anger, curiosity.

**discuss:** WRONG ☹ Before the party, we **discussed about** how we would get home afterwards.

RIGHT! ☺ we discussed how  
RIGHT! ☺ we talked about how

**CE fit:** *WRONG* ☹ These exercises fail to **fit/fit to** the learners' needs.

RIGHT! ☺ fail to **meet** the learners' needs.

RIGHT! ☺ These exercises are not suitable for the learners.

**fun:** *WRONG* ☹ It **makes fun** to go snorkelling in bogs.

RIGHT! ☺ It is/It's fun

Also *WRONG* ☹ It's **funny** [unless you mean this in the sense of *peculiar* – in which case Auntie Alligator would have to agree]

**miss:** *WRONG* ☹ I **messed to** hand in the paper before the deadline.

RIGHT! ☺ I **failed to/forgot to/didn't** hand in the paper before the deadline.

**nerve:** *WRONG* ☹ It **can nerve** if your neighbour plays the same song over and over.

RIGHT! ☺ It can be annoying/irritating if ... ☺ It gets on your nerves if...

Other expressions with "nerve" are: ☺ You've got a nerve! (Du hast vielleicht Nerven!) ☺ He lost his nerve as the barrel approached the waterfall.

**overview:** *WRONG* ☹ Give an overview **over** the main problems.

RIGHT! ☺ Give an overview **of** the main problems.

**pay:** *WRONG* ☹ I **paid my** white chocolate pumpkin spice mocha latte frappé and hurried out of the café.

RIGHT! ☺ I **paid for my** overpriced coffee speciality, and hurried out of the café.

You ☺ **pay** (direct object, no "for!"): your bills, taxes, library and traffic fines, tuition fees, the/a price for X, the taxi-driver, the waiter (etc.).

You ☺ **pay for** your coffee, your mistakes, good quality, the groceries, utilities and services (etc.).

**replace:** *WRONG* ☹ I **replaced** the word "nice" **by** the word "attractive".

RIGHT! ☺ I replaced the word "nice" **with** the word "attractive"

RIGHT! ☺ The word "nice" was replaced by the word "attractive".

**task:** *WRONG* ☹ We tried to **\*solve the task** Professor Fury had set us, but it was impossible.

RIGHT! ☺ **perform/carry out/do/complete** the task

---

☺ **DO**, not ☹ **MAKE**: homework, housework, sport, some exercise(s), research

☺ **MAKE**, not ☹ **DO**: mistake, error

# MAZE OF MORPHOLOGICAL INVENTIVENESS

All of this is relevant for the LPT

These words do not exist; but something rather similar to them does.

- ☹ \*abolishment should be ☺ **abolition**
- ☹ \*acquirement should be ☺ **acquisition**
- ☹ \*adaption should be ☺ **adaptation**
- ☹ \*analization should be ☺ **analysis**
- ☹ \*appliance should be ☺ **application** unless it refers to household appliances such as toasters and coffee machines
- ☹ \*approvement should be ☺ **approval**
- ☹ \*nervosity should be ☺ **nervousness**
- ☹ \*injust should be ☺ **unjust**
- ☹ \*narcisstic should be ☺ **narcissistic**
- ☹ \*registrate should be **register**
- ☹ \*representate should be ☺ **represent**
- ☹ \*representator should be ☺ **representative**
- ☹ \*unequality should be ☺ **inequality** - although the adjective is ☺ **unequal**;  
e.g. unequal distribution, treatment, partners, opportunities, distribution of power.

*Some pointers on emailing your university teachers in British and American Studies (and even more so, at universities abroad)*

- Write in English.
- Be friendly but respectful.

- Don't start with a breezy "Hallo," and continue with your email, e.g. "could you please tell me..." (which should be "Could you..." anyway). It may be fine in semi-formal German but it sounds offhand and somewhat disrespectful in English.
- Begin with Dear (*title plus last name, or first name, provided the recipient has indicated they are happy with first-name terms*)
- If you know the recipient *well*, "Hello X" or "Hi X" are acceptable. (No, no, don't call them "X". Use their name.)
- It is worth finding out the recipient's actual title from the [staff list](#). While most of us may be flattered to be promoted to "Professor" or "Professor Dr", this is not Hogwarts and only three or four of the staff members are actually entitled to the honorific "Professor" in the German academic system. (At the time of writing, though, some unknown person with power over websites at the university has decided that everyone with a doctorate should be called ☹️\***Mr Dr** Fury or ☹️\***Ms Dr** Vulture on the English webpages. This is a direct translation of German "Frau/Herr Dr." and is NOT correct English. If someone has a doctorate, they are addressed only as "Dr".)
- Many members of staff do have the title "Dr". In English, unlike in German, it is expected to use this title rather than "Mr" or "Ms" if someone has a doctorate.
- The honorific "Mrs" is *not* the equivalent of German "Frau". It can **only be used for a married woman**. The honorific "Miss" designates an unmarried woman. This is the equivalent of "Fräulein", and is equally old-fashioned and, in Auntie Alligator's view, unacceptable.
- "Misses" does not mean "Mrs": it means more than one "Miss" (which should be avoided anyway, see last and next point).
- In addressing women, "Ms" is the equivalent of "Mr", and is very widely accepted and used. Unlike "Miss and Mrs", it does not add information about a woman's marital status, which is nobody's damned business, as Auntie Alligator often remarks (also, she would like to state at this point that the rumours about herself and Captain Crocodile are entirely untrue).
- It's acceptable to use "Ms" to address women if you are unsure about their academic title, unless you are in a dreadfully conservative context where people insist on the "Mrs"/"Miss" distinction. The honorific (i.e. form of address) "[Mx](#)" is now used on official forms in the UK as a gender-neutral title. It may not have reached Bielefeld University on a widespread basis yet, so any use of it may be put down to bad typing on your part.
- Start the main text of the email with a capital letter, impressing the recipient mightily with your expertise in the conventions of English correspondence.
- If you are sending an attachment, use the phrase "I'm sending you [my paper/homework/table of contents etc.]", not ☹️\*"I send you" or even worse, ☹️\*"With this email I send you" or ☹️\*"Herewith I send you" which are (both pragmatically and grammatically) Germanisms. "Please find attached" is perhaps more appropriate in the context of business, but is acceptable.
- It's fine to use contractions (e.g. won't, haven't, couldn't, didn't – or, if the email contains happier news, I'll, it'll, we've, it's) in emails. However, "wanna", "gotta" and "gonna" are not

standard contractions and should be reserved for writing fictional dialogue in which a certain accent is represented, or for the more relaxed kinds of internet forums.

- The phrase ☹️☹️☹️ “Thank you for your efforts” is not an appropriate translation of “Vielen Dank für Ihre Bemühungen”; to anyone not familiar with German, it might imply that the “efforts” were not sufficient. Use “Many thanks for your help” instead.
- As a closing formula, “Kind regards” or “Best regards” are appropriately polite; if you know the recipient *well*, “Best wishes”, “All the best”, or the chilled “Best”, which Auntie Alligator is not cool enough to use, are good choices. If you’ve asked for a major favour, “I really appreciate any help you can provide” (and not “Thank you in advance”) may soften the recipient’s heart.
- Don’t worry if you have not done these things in the past. Your readers are busy and preoccupied and usually don’t notice.