

Use this checklist on every draft before you send it, whether it is an essay, a report, a CV or an email. Work through one section at a time, tick each box, and read the whole piece aloud at the end. Each point links to Part 1, Part 2 or Part 3 of the course.

1. Sentences

Part 1

- ☐ Every sentence has a subject and a main verb, so no fragments remain.

Weak: *Because the train was late.*

Better: *Because the train was late, I missed the seminar.*

- ☐ Verb tenses stay consistent unless the time genuinely changes.

Weak: *She opens the file and saved it.*

Better: *She opened the file and saved it.*

- ☐ Subjects and verbs agree in number.

Weak: *The list of names are on the desk.*

Better: *The list of names is on the desk.*

- ☐ Each modifier sits next to the word it describes.

Weak: *Walking to work, the rain soaked me.*

Better: *Walking to work, I was soaked by the rain.*

- ☐ Every pronoun points clearly to one noun.

Weak: *Sam told Ali that he had passed.*

Better: *Sam told Ali that Ali had passed.*

2. Style

Part 1

- ☐ Active voice is the default; passive voice is chosen for a reason.

Weak: *The report was written by the team.*

Better: *The team wrote the report.*

- ☐ Sentence lengths vary, mixing short and longer sentences.

- ☐ Main ideas sit in main clauses; minor ideas are subordinated.

Weak: *The NHS is busy and it hired staff.*

Better: *Because the NHS is busy, it hired staff.*

- ☐ Items in a list share the same grammatical form.

Weak: *I like reading, to cook and swimming.*

Better: *I like reading, cooking and swimming.*

- ☐ Language is inclusive and respectful, using they where gender is unknown.

Weak: *Each student must bring his laptop.*

Better: *Each student must bring their laptop.*

3. Word Choice

Part 2

- ☐ Wordy phrases are cut down to their essentials.

Weak: *due to the fact that*

Better: *because*

- ☐ The register suits the reader: no slang in formal writing.

Weak: *The results were well good.*

Better: *The results were excellent.*

- ☐ Words are precise rather than vague.
Weak: *The council did some things.*
Better: *The council repaired three bridges.*
- ☐ Commonly confused words are checked.
Check: *affect / effect, practice / practise*
- ☐ Suggestions from spellcheckers and AI tools are verified, not accepted blindly.

4. Punctuation

Part 2

- ☐ Commas follow introductory elements and separate list items.
Weak: *After lunch we left.*
Better: *After lunch, we left.*
- ☐ No comma splices: two full sentences are not joined by a comma alone.
Weak: *It rained, we stayed in.*
Better: *It rained, so we stayed in.*
- ☐ Semicolons link related sentences; colons introduce lists or explanations.
Example: *Bring three things: a pen, a notebook and ID.*
- ☐ Apostrophes show possession or omission correctly.
Weak: *The dog wagged it's tail.*
Better: *The dog wagged its tail.*
- ☐ British style: single quotation marks, punctuation inside only if it belongs.
Example: *She called it 'a turning point'.*
- ☐ Hyphens join compound adjectives before a noun.
Weak: *a well known author*
Better: *a well-known author*

5. Spelling

Part 3

- ☐ British spellings are used consistently.
Weak: *organize, color, center*
Better: *organise, colour, centre*
- ☐ Frequently misspelt words are checked.
Weak: *accomodate, definately, seperate*
Better: *accommodate, definitely, separate*
- ☐ Homophones are correct.
Weak: *Their going to there office.*
Better: *They are going to their office.*

6. Capitals and Abbreviations

Part 3

- ☐ Proper nouns, titles and the start of sentences are capitalised.
Weak: *the university of leeds*
Better: *the University of Leeds*
- ☐ Seasons and general subjects stay lower case.
Weak: *in the Spring I studied History*
Better: *in the spring I studied history*
- ☐ Acronyms are written in full on first use.
Example: *the Office for National Statistics (ONS)*
- ☐ No full stop after Mr, Mrs, Dr or St in British style.
Weak: *Dr. Jones*
Better: *Dr Jones*

7. Numbers and Italics

Part 3

- ☐ Numbers one to nine are written as words; 10 and above as figures.
Weak: *We interviewed 6 people.*
Better: *We interviewed six people.*
- ☐ Never start a sentence with a figure.
Weak: *25 students attended.*
Better: *Twenty-five students attended.*
- ☐ Dates follow the British pattern.
Weak: *March 14, 2026*
Better: *14 March 2026*
- ☐ Titles of books, films and newspapers are in italics.
Example: *I read The Guardian every morning.*

8. Grammar

Part 3

- ☐ Pronoun case is correct after prepositions.
Weak: *between you and I*
Better: *between you and me*
- ☐ Who refers to people; which refers to things.
Weak: *the doctor which treated me*
Better: *the doctor who treated me*
- ☐ Adverbs, not adjectives, describe verbs.
Weak: *She did good in the exam.*
Better: *She did well in the exam.*
- ☐ No double negatives.
Weak: *We did not find nothing.*
Better: *We did not find anything.*
- ☐ Final read aloud: slow down and listen for anything that trips you up.