

# PCCS Books

## Some general rules of grammar

### General tips

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Avoid the passive tense:

I gave the client some homework exercises

NOT The client was given some homework exercises

Avoid using **one** – use **you**, **I** or **we** instead.

Avoid using **he** (or **she**) to describe people of any sex/all sexes. Use **she** and **he** interchangeably, or **he or she**, or **they**.

Avoid using **within** unless the subject really is inside something else or to describe a measure of distance. Usually it is more accurate (and less pretentious) simply to write **in**.

Not **Within the university counselling sector...**

but **In the university counselling sector...**

### Brackets

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If the bracketed words form a complete sentence, the punctuation is within the brackets. If the bracketed words are within another complete sentence, the punctuation is outside the brackets:

His argument (not to be taken lightly) was with the implicit allusion...

His argument was with the implicit allusion. (It was not to be taken lightly.)

Square brackets are used in direct quotes to show that the words inside the brackets have been added by the writer or editor, or the text has been modified by the writer/editor, usually to clarify the meaning:

She [the editor] had added several paragraphs to clarify the meaning.

They are also used around ellipses that have been added to quotes in addition to any existing ellipsis in the original text [...] see **Ellipsis** below.

### Collective nouns

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Nouns such as **committee**, **family**, **government**, **team** take a singular verb or pronoun when the entity is acting as a single unit, but a plural verb or pronoun when it is acting as a collection of individuals. Data are always plural.

The committee gave its unanimous approval to the plans...

The committee are always given biscuits with their tea....

Her family disapproves of the liaison

The family were gathered together for the event

## Colons and semi-colons

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Use a **colon** between two sentences, or two parts of a sentence, where the first introduces a proposition that is resolved by the second:

Nicholls had other ideas: he wanted to revisit the whole concept of fantasy.

Use a colon as an alternative to a comma to introduce a quotation where the quote can stand alone as a sentence or paragraph (see Commas above):

He said: 'You'll never finish your PhD.'

Use a colon to introduce a list within the main text:

He was an expert in four modalities: cognitive behavioural therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy, person-centred counselling and Gestalt.

However a colon is not needed if the list is simply part of the sentence:

She was an expert in a range of modalities that included cognitive behavioural therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy and Gestalt.

And to precede bullet point lists or numbered lists. A colon is always followed by lower case. In bullet point and numbered lists there are no full stops at the end of each point until the list closes:

The following modalities are covered in the course:

- cognitive behavioural therapy
- person-centred counselling
- dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT)
- Gestalt.

You may precede the final point with a comma, followed by 'and':

The following modalities are covered in the course:

- cognitive behavioural therapy
- person-centred counselling
- dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT), and
- Gestalt.

The **semicolon** is a compromise between a full stop (too strong) and a comma (not strong enough). It can replace 'and' or 'but'. Both clauses should contain a subject, object and verb:

Some writers are good presenters; others are less verbally articulate.

It's a long way to drive; by rail the journey time is halved.

It can also be used to separate items of more than two or three words in lists within the text. The final item should always be preceded by a comma.

The following topics are covered in the course: consent and children and young people; confidentiality and disclosure, and sharing records in the school context.

## Commas

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Use commas before 'and', 'or' and 'but' only when they join two main clauses in a sentence and both main clauses have a subject:

A third were offered psychotherapy, but most did not return after the first session.

Two in three received CBT, and they all went on to recover.

Two in three received CBT and went on to recover.  
There was a long pause and then a deafening crash.

Do not use a comma before the final 'and' and 'or' in lists unless it is essential to clarify meaning or for emphasis (the Oxford comma):

The choices of therapies were limited to psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, and (oddly) CBT.

The choices of therapy were CBT, counselling for depression, psychodynamic psychotherapy and interpersonal psychotherapy.

Commas are essential to distinguish between commenting clauses (commas needed) and defining clauses (no comma):

Nursing staff, who often work overtime, are likely to suffer from stress.

Nursing staff who often work overtime are likely to suffer from stress.

### Dangling participles

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Avoid them – they're inelegant and can lead to confusion. The subordinate (potentially dangling) clause must have the same subject as the rest of the sentence:

NOT *Joining the organisation in 2004, her first step was to...* (her first step is the subject and it didn't join the organisation)

BUT *When she joined the organisation in 2004, her first step was to...*

OR *On joining the organisation in 2004, her first step was to...*

NOT *Based in the UK, Nick Smith's most famous book is...* (his book is the subject, and it isn't based in the UK)

BUT *Based in the UK, Nick Smith is best known for his book...*

OR *Nick Smith, who is based in the UK, is best known for his book...*

Be careful when using the *-ing* ending; it can lead to ambiguity and a grammatical minefield. For example:

*The second approach requires clients completing standardised measures*

This (mis)use of the present participle could be understood to mean:

*The second approach requires the recruitment of clients who are currently completing standardised measures.*

Or, more probably, it means:

*The second approach requires clients to complete standardised measures.*

### Ellipses

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The ellipsis (three dots) may be used in quotes to indicate where some words from the original have been omitted. There should be no space before the ellipsis and a space after:

*Owens explains: 'Beck and his co-authors credit Freud with the central premise that unconscious ideas fuel our emotions... and presenting symptoms of depression.'*

If the original text contains an ellipsis and further ellipses are added in the quotation, they should go in square brackets [...] (see Brackets).

## En dashes

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En dashes (longer than a hyphen and shorter than an em dash) can be used instead of a colon or brackets:

Rogers' pre-occupation – not too strong a word – with the topic was to have important repercussions.

There may be rare moments when a client-centred therapist adopts an instrumental attitude – instances that are quite uncharacteristic of the approach.

Note: To allocate an en dash shortcut key on a PC keyboard, go to **Insert**, then click the **Symbol** tab on the ribbon, and then **Special characters** and follow the instructions.

## Inverted commas/quote marks

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Punctuation within and around quotes often causes problems. We always use single quotes for speech and quotations, and double quotes within the single quotes.

Where the piece of speech/quote is a complete sentence in itself, the punctuation related to the quote should always come inside the inverted commas. There is no need for a further full stop, comma etc after a question mark or exclamation mark:

In the context of today's recession, I question the widespread use of the Second World War exhortation to 'keep calm and carry on.'

Beresford asks, 'Do counsellors really seek congruence with their clients?' He asserts that this is far from the case.

Where direct speech or a quote is preceded by information about who is speaking, use a comma to introduce it, or a colon if it is a stand-alone chunk of quote:

She said, 'I can cite examples from my own practice of children who are gaining so much from counselling.'

Enderby wrote: 'The principles of person-centred counselling are not explained.'

If the direct speech or quote is broken up by information about who is speaking, use a comma (or a question mark or exclamation mark as above) to end the first piece of speech and a full stop or another comma before the second piece (before the inverted comma or commas):

'I can cite examples of children from my own practice who are gaining so much from counselling,' she said. 'I have seen it help children who are bereaved, or the child of bickering, divorcing parents.'

'Can you cite examples of children from your own practice who are gaining so much from counselling?' they asked her. 'I have seen it help children who are bereaved, or the child of bickering, divorcing parents,' she said.

If the piece of speech or quote is not a complete sentence in itself, then the punctuation goes **outside** the inverted commas:

In his article, he writes that clients are 'scared', 'apprehensive' and 'unable to engage fully with the therapist'.

The report commends third sector organisations 'for their closeness to communities and to client groups that statutory services may struggle to reach'.

If you are quoting a section of text longer than 35–40 words, the quotes should be given a new paragraph, indented from the left margin and introduced by a colon. There is no need for inverted commas:

Rogers came to believe that (1989: 210):

Rather than feeling that a person is inevitably doomed by unalterable forces which have shaped him, this study suggests that the most potent influence in his future behaviour is one which is certainly alterable to some degree.

## Latinate/Greek words

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Where they are part of the English language (eg *forum*, *stadium*, *addendum*, *referendum*) Latinate words take an s in the plural – except *curriculum/curricula*; *media* (but note that spiritualists are *mediums*).

**Greek derivations** take a Greek plural:

*Phenomenon/phenomena*; *criterion/criteria*.

## Past participles

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-t is the ending for a past participle:

The cakes were burnt and the lesson was learnt.

-ed is the past tense:

The cakes burned while Alfred learned his lesson.

## Reflexive pronouns

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Reflexive pronouns (*myself*, *himself*, *herself*, *yourself*, *itself* and *themselves*) are always the object of a sentence, never the subject:

I looked at myself in the mirror

When *myself* is both subject and object, use *me*:

If it were left to me, I would choose to stay at home

It's become a common mistake to use 'myself' instead of 'me' or 'I'. As a broad rule of thumb, 'myself' can be reflexive (I'm doing something to/for myself) or it can be used to add emphasis (I myself); otherwise, use me or I.

These are correct:

I gave myself a good talking to (not 'I gave me...')

I myself disagreed with the argument (added emphasis)

These are not correct:

Myself and my colleague were invited to join the working group (it should be 'I')

It was put to myself that I was in breach of the law (it should be 'me')

Jane, John and myself went swimming (it should be 'I')

A helpful test is to remove the other people from the sentence; you wouldn't write 'Me went swimming', for example.

## Relative clauses

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Relative clauses (clauses introduced by **which** and **that**) come in two forms.

The **restrictive relative clause** contains important and necessary information about the noun that precedes it. It is always preceded by **that**, without a comma:

**She offered me the book that she had been reading.**

**She waved down a taxi that was just passing.**

The **unrestricted relative clause** contains information that could be removed from the sentence without affecting the sense. It is introduced by **which**, **whom**, **whose** or **who** (but never **that**), and always follows a comma:

**A list of the contents would have made it easier to navigate through the book, which also lacks a bibliography.**

It also conveys a very different meaning:

**He asked to see the room, which was currently vacant.**

**He asked to see the room that was currently vacant.**

In the first the fact that the room was vacant is incidental to his request to see it. In the second he is specifically asking to see the vacant room.