Common Errors in Technical Writing

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• “et al.”: Indicating “and others” in citations.
• If you cite one author in body text, it should be “AuthorOne”. Two authors: “AuthorOne and AuthorTwo”. Three or more authors: “AuthorOne et al.” (although, for three authors, I understand “AuthorOne, AuthorTwo, and AuthorThree” is OK).
• “et al.” stands for “et alia”. It does NOT have a period after “et” and DOES have one after “al.”
Inter-word Space

• “TeX assumes a period ends a sentence unless it follows an uppercase letter.” (Lamport p. 14)
• So, put a \_ (where \_ means “space”) in a sentence like Smith et al.\ say that ....
• If an uppercase letter ends a sentence, do a \@ before the period: In the class, I gave Bob a C\@.
• “…without much losses. This has convinced us…”
First Person, Passive Voice

• Please write in first person and avoid the passive voice. Academic writing does not have to be stilted and boring.

• Chicago Manual of Style: “When you need the first person, use it. It's not immodest to use it; it's superstitious not to.”

• Simon Crowley: “Every time you use the passive voice, a kitten is killed by God.”
Hyphenation

• “We built a high-performance implementation.”
• “high-performance” is hyphenated because “high” modifies “performance” not “implementation”. It's not a “high implementation”. Here, “high-performance” is an adjective.
• But: “Our implementation has high performance.” Here, “performance” is a noun. No hyphen.
• Similarly: “throughput-oriented workloads” or “GPU-based implementation”.

Citations as words

• van Leunen: “Brackets are not words. A bracketed number is just a pointer, not a word. Never, ever, use a bracketed number as if it were the name of an author or a work.” (p. 20).

• So instead of
  “A similar strategy is described in [15].”), use instead
  “A similar strategy is discussed by AuthorOne et al. [15].”.
Latin and Italics

• “et al.” is not italicized or underlined (Chicago Manual of Style 7.56: “Commonly used Latin words and abbreviations should not be italicized. ibid, et al., ca., passim.” [and later, 6.44: “Note that ‘e.g.’ and ‘i.e.’ are not italicized.”]).

• The difference between i.e. and e.g., which contrary to popular belief aren't synonymous: “id est” means “that is” and “exempli gratia” means “for example”.
Citing with LaTeX

• When writing citations in LaTeX, do them in this form:
  \text{text text text~\cite{Foo:2000:BAR}}

• The ~ means non-breaking space (which is what you want -- you don't want a linebreak between the text and the citation).

• Also, do
  \cite{AuthorOne:2000:ABC,AuthorTwo:2002:DEF}

• instead of
  \cite{AuthorOne:2000:ABC}\cite{AuthorTwo:2002:DEF}
Preamble

1. Approach
   1.1 Preliminaries

You NEVER put section 1.1 immediately after the heading of section 1. Instead use a preamble:

1. Approach
In this section, we first present some preliminary mathematic notations, and then …
   1.1 Preliminaries

… …
And …

• “And we have discovered that …”
• “And Figure 5 shows the results…”

• Do NOT use “and”, “also”, “yet”, etc., in the beginning of a sentence. This is NOT formal!
Like vs. such as

• “Other authors like XXX, YYY and ZZZ …”
• “… existing methods like XXX and YYY …”

• Always avoid the use of “like”
• Instead, use “such as”
Firstly, … Secondly, …

• Instead of saying “Firstly, … Secondly…”

• Say “First, …. Second, …. ”
Use of quotes “ ”

• In LaTeX, it’s two back ticks (``) and two apostrophes (”), NOT “ and ”!

• End quote should be after full stop:
  • As Forest Gump famously said, “life is like a box of chocolate.”
  • Jane yelled at me, “Shut up!”
XXXs’

• “…, by computing the words’ distribution”
• Grammatically correct but very rare these days.
• Instead: “by computing the word distribution”

• “Figure 2 demonstrates our models’ advantage over others…”
• Instead: “Figure 2 demonstrates the advantage of our models over others…”