

## Planning Theory & Practice: A Guide for Authors

*Planning Theory & Practice* provides an international focus for the development of theory and practice in spatial planning. Members of the editorial team recognize that English is a second or even third language for many of the theorists and practitioners who aim to publish in the journal, and aim to provide a high level of editorial support to help authors struggling with language barriers.

However, while papers are never rejected on linguistic grounds alone, fluent and precise use of language inevitably predisposes editors favourably towards a paper. Authors, especially those working in their first language, are expected to present the 'story' of their paper in as concise and coherent a manner as possible. While some specialized terminology is sometimes appropriate for a paper, overuse of theoretical jargon is discouraged, as it can easily detract from the clarity of a paper's argument.

Authors are asked to consider the international nature of the journal's audience when submitting, drawing out the wider significance of their research to make it relevant and accessible to all. Though it can be assumed that readers are well-versed in planning issues, many may be unfamiliar with the specific national or local context of an individual's work. Therefore, culturally specific terms, especially acronyms, need to be elucidated for an international readership, and local or national issues may require careful explanation.

Conversely, the editors recognize that diverse cultures have different but equally valid traditions in academic writing. For instance, American writers assiduously avoid the passive voice as clumsy and awkward, while British writers consistently favour the passive for its impersonality and aura of scientific detachment. *Planning Theory & Practice* accepts papers written in both styles, with the stipulation that authors should endeavour to be reasonably consistent in their use of one or the other, as appropriate. Articles may be written in English or US spelling.

## Some Common Mistakes

The following guide to academic writing is not meant to be an exhaustive guide to academic writing in English, but is instead intended as a list of the most common errors and problems that we encounter when subediting papers.

- Verbs

The subject and verb of the sentence must agree. Usually this is straightforward, but confusion sometimes arises in the case of collective nouns:

Faulty:       The government are passing new laws.  
Correct:       The government is passing new laws.

- Tenses

Try to ensure that tenses are consistent within a piece of writing:

Faulty:       ‘In the parliamentary debates, the minister *was* one of the few to note the importance of sustainability. However, the way he conceptualized the issue *is* problematic’.

Correct:       ‘In the parliamentary debates, the minister *was* one of the few to note the importance of sustainability. However, his conceptualization of the issue *was* problematic.’

- Pronouns

Gender issues can arise when using pronouns. Unnecessary gender specificity can sometimes be avoided by using plural terms:

Faulty:       A planner must see his supervisor before the end of the year.

Correct:       Planners must see their supervisors before the end of the year.

Planning Theory and Practice accepts the modern use of the gender-neutral pronoun ‘their’ to avoid these problems, e.g. ‘Somebody has left their notes on the table’.

- Parallel Form

Parallel grammatical constructions are very useful, since they allow similar ideas to be grouped together. However, they are frequently used incorrectly in academic writing.

Grammatically, parallelism requires that expressions of similar content and function should be outwardly similar, making them more readable.

**Faulty:** The bill was sent to the writer, the paper and to the editor.

**Correct:** The bill was sent to the writer, the paper and the editor OR  
The bill was sent to the writer, to the paper and to the editor.

In a parallel structure, words must take the same grammatical form:

**Faulty:** ‘The objections to the plan are, first, the injustice of it; second, that it is unconstitutional’

**Correct:** ‘The objections to the plan are, first, that it is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional’.

Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third;) should be followed by the same grammatical construction. However, correct prepositions must be used:

**Faulty:** ‘The planner was interested and excited about the new advances in theoretical approaches to the issue’. (‘Interested about’ is incorrect).

**Correct:** ‘The planner was **interested in** and **excited about** the new advances in theoretical approaches to the issue’

## Punctuation

- Parentheses

The overuse of parentheses or dashes to mark parenthetical clauses creates sentences that are visually confusing and therefore hard to read. It is often better to use a pair of commas as the textual delimiter, or to rewrite the sentence to avoid parentheses.

- Quotation marks

All speech marks should be single (‘’) with double quotation marks reserved for quotations within quotations (“”). Ellipses within a quotation should be denoted with three dots (...).

- Contractions

Avoid using contractions (don't, shouldn't), unless reporting speech.

- Lists

Lists should be preceded by a colon, with each term separated by commas:

**Faulty:**           The meeting raised a number of issues: race; gender; class; religion.

**Correct:**           The meeting raised a number of issues: race, gender, class, religion.

However, if the list is more complex and contains commas within individual items, semicolons can be used instead:

‘Attending the meeting were Mr B Ore, Minister; Dr B Etle, biologist; Professor R Ayn, climatologist; and Dr G Raph, mathematician.’

Names, numbers, figures, dates

- Measurements

All measurements should be given in metric units.

- Dates

As a rule of thumb, numbers below one hundred are usually written out, but numbers above one hundred may be presented numerically:

Ten representatives came to the presentation, where they heard that 421 jobs were to be cut.

Dates are usually written with a numbered day, named month and numbered year:

The Act was passed on 1 May 2000.

However, references to centuries are written out in full, without any capitalization:

During the twentieth century many services were cut.

Decades may be referred to by name or number. The numbered form is not followed by an apostrophe:

In the 1960s, the advent of feminism led to increased demands for a more egalitarian society.

- Capitalization

Capitalization is appropriate for:

Proper nouns:	Marilyn Monroe, Tong Leung, France, Germany.
Adjectives	Adjectives are capitalized if they derive from proper nouns (Christian, Canadian, Shakespearean)
Names of civic holidays:	Easter, Ramadan
Geographical names:	North Temperate Zone, America, Atlantic Ocean. However, plurals are not capitalized: 'Sahara and Gobi deserts'. Also, 'the' is capitalized only when it is part of a placename, e.g. The Bahamas but the Netherlands.
Events	Days of the week are capitalized (Monday, Tuesday), as are important events (Labor Day)
Trade names	Are capitalized where appropriate, e.g. Windows, Twinings but easyjet.
Journal titles	<i>International Journal of Information Management</i>