

# Academic Writing Workshop

Editing for your Reader:  
Spelling, Paragraph Structure,  
Constructing an Argument

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## In this workshop:

- It is always important to remember that you are writing for a reader or readers!
- What does the reader of academic writing look for?
  - Amongst other things, the reader looks for:
    - Logic
    - Coherence
    - A clear argument

## In this workshop:

We will consider the significance of:

- Accuracy of spelling
- Structuring of paragraphs
- Building a strong argument

English spelling is far from easy! Some common problems are:

- Confusing homonyms
  - their/there/they're
  - (council/counsel)

- A common rule of spelling is:

- ***'i before e except after c...'***

Examples:

- Receive, ceiling, receipt

- Friend, believe, retrieve

BUT there are exceptions:

- Weird, albeit, freight, ageing, weight

Common confusion comes from different spelling of verbs ('s') vs nouns ('c'):

## **Practise vs practice**

- Without regular practice, she would never be able to play the piano well; thus she practises every day!

## **Advise vs advice**

- I advise you to seek advice on that issue.

## **License vs licence**

- Having gained his HGV driving licence, he was licensed to drive a truck.

## Exercise 1: Spelling

Working with a partner, fill in the blanks in the sentences with the appropriately-spelled word.

## Exercise 1: Spelling

- He was highly complimentary about my work.
- She always had very strongly-held principles.
- My father rides for miles on his stationary bicycle.
- It was definitely one of the worst fires the country had ever seen.
- My sister has had difficulty finding suitable accommodation.
- Everyone was affected by the good news.
  - *(The good news had a positive effect on everyone.)*



Your reader immediately receives information from the paragraph divisions on the page.

- Each paragraph represents a point being made in the promotion of the argument.
- Paragraphs / points should be presented in a logical order.
- Each paragraph should have a beginning, a middle and an end – a bit like the structure of an essay in miniature (Introduction, Main Body, Conclusion).

The example on the next slide is very confusing  
to the reader.

(Next slide excerpt from Rhacel Salazar Parrenas (2003) 'The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy,' in Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (eds) *Global Woman*.)

A growing crisis of care troubles the world's most developed nations. Even as demand for care has increased, its supply has dwindled. The result is a care deficit, to which women from the Philippines have responded in force. Roughly two-thirds of Filipino migrant workers are women, and their exodus, usually to fill domestic jobs, has generated tremendous social change in the Philippines. When female migrants are mothers, they leave behind their own children, usually in the care of other women. Many Filipino children now grow up in divided households, where geographic separation places children under serious emotional strain. And yet it is impossible to overlook the significance of migrant labor to the Philippine economy. Some 34 to 54 percent of the Filipino population is sustained by remittances from migrant workers. Women in the Philippines, just like their counterparts in postindustrial nations, suffer from a "stalled revolution." Local gender ideology remains a few steps behind the economic reality, which has produced numerous female-headed, transnational households. Consequently, a far greater degree of anxiety attends the quality of family life for the dependents of migrant mothers than for those of migrant fathers. The dominant gender ideology, after all, holds that a woman's rightful place is in the home, and the households of migrant mothers present a challenge to this view. In response, government officials and journalists denounce migrating mothers, claiming that they have caused the Filipino family to deteriorate, children to be abandoned, and a crisis of care to take root in the Philippines. Indeed, in May 1995, Philippine President Fidel Ramos called for initiatives to keep migrant mothers at home. He declared, "We are not against overseas employment of Filipino women. We are against overseas employment at the cost of family solidarity. Migration, Ramos strongly implied, is morally acceptable only when it is undertaken by single, childless women. The Philippine media reinforce this position by consistently publishing sensationalist reports on the suffering of children in transnational families. They reports tend to vilify migrant mothers, suggesting that their children face more profound problems than do those of migrant fathers; and despite the fact that most of the children in question are left with relatives, journalists refer to them as having been "abandoned." One article reports, "A child's sense of loss appears to be greater when it is the mother who leaves to work abroad." Others link the emigration of mothers to the inadequate child care and family life that eventually lead such children to "drugs, gambling, and drinking."

## Exercise 2: Paragraphing

Decide how the text could be divided into  
three paragraphs.

**Para.1** A growing crisis of care troubles the world's most developed nations. Even as demand for care has increased, its supply has dwindled. The result is a care deficit, to which women from the Philippines have responded in force. Roughly two-thirds of Filipino migrant workers are women, and their exodus, usually to fill domestic jobs, has generated tremendous social change in the Philippines. When female migrants are mothers, they leave behind their own children, usually in the care of other women. Many Filipino children now grow up in divided households, where geographic separation places children under serious emotional strain. And yet it is impossible to overlook the significance of migrant labor to the Philippine economy. Some 34 to 54 percent of the Filipino population is sustained by remittances from migrant workers.

**Para.2** Women in the Philippines, just like their counterparts in postindustrial nations, suffer from a "stalled revolution." Local gender ideology remains a few steps behind the economic reality, which has produced numerous female-headed, transnational households. Consequently, a far greater degree of anxiety attends the quality of family life for the dependents of migrant mothers than for those of migrant fathers. The dominant gender ideology, after all, holds that a woman's rightful place is in the home, and the households of migrant mothers present a challenge to this view. In response, government officials and journalists denounce migrating mothers, claiming that they have caused the Filipino family to deteriorate, children to be abandoned, and a crisis of care to take root in the Philippines. Indeed, in May 1995, Philippine President Fidel Ramos called for initiatives to keep migrant mothers at home. He declared, "We are not against overseas employment of Filipino women. We are against overseas employment at the cost of family solidarity. Migration, Ramos strongly implied, is morally acceptable only when it is undertaken by single, childless women.

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**Para.3** The Philippine media reinforce this position by consistently publishing sensationalist reports on the suffering of children in transnational families. Their reports tend to vilify migrant mothers, suggesting that their children face more profound problems than do those of migrant fathers; and despite the fact that most of the children in question are left with relatives, journalists refer to them as having been “abandoned.” One article reports, “A child’s sense of loss appears to be greater when it is the mother who leaves to work abroad.” Others link the emigration of mothers to the inadequate child care and family life that eventually lead such children to “drugs, gambling, and drinking.”

# What is an argument?

- An argument is a series of points, supported by evidence, which leads the reader to a conclusion (or conclusions).
- An argument can be brief (one sentence) or extended (an essay, an article, a chapter in a book).
- A well-structured piece of academic writing will present its reader with a clear argument.

## What is an argument? (continued)

- An argument is the “backbone” of a piece of academic writing.
- Each point in an argument will probably correspond to a paragraph.
- A strong argument will convince the reader.
- A weak argument will not convince the reader.



## Exercise 3: Evaluating the Argument

In small groups, read the two short arguments, and decide whether each presents a *strong* or a *weak* argument.

## To sum up...

- Accurate spelling will enhance the coherence of your writing.
- A piece of academic writing must be underpinned by an argument. The argument needs to be supported by evidence.
- A strong argument convinces your reader that you reached your conclusion(s) in a reasoned way.
- Generally, each paragraph in academic writing discusses a separate point of the argument.
- Good editing can improve a paragraph so that the reader can clearly follow the argument.