

REFERENCE WORKS

Dictionaries

It is recommended that students of English Studies own, or at least have unlimited access to, a number of reference works to help them improve the accuracy of their English. The dictionaries you used at school are probably no longer sufficient for your advanced language needs, particularly when it comes to academic register. You should have large, up-to-date dictionaries of the following kinds, produced by reputable publishers:

- Bilingual dictionary (English – your dominant language)
- Monolingual / advanced learner's dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Collocations dictionary

Monolingual / Learner's Dictionaries

Most dictionaries (especially for learners) contain a wealth of information on vocabulary and grammar. Each dictionary provides different information and uses different codes to express it. Here is an example:

Info on the word's frequency in spoken and written language.

IPA symbols showing word's pronunciation.

Symbols showing this is a transitive verb (it is used with an object).

di·scuss [s3] [w1] [dɪ'skʌs] [T]

1 to talk about something with another person or a group in order to exchange ideas or decide something: *Littman refused to discuss the case publicly. | If you would like to discuss the matter further, please call me. | discuss sth with sb Pupils should be given time to discuss the book with their classmates. | discuss what/who/where etc Your accountant will discuss with you how to complete these forms.*

Prepositions used with the word.

Example collocations

2 to talk or write about something in detail and consider different ideas or opinions about it: *This topic will be discussed in Chapter 4.*

Different meanings

Example sentences.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Oxford: OUP)

A good advanced learner's dictionary can also provide:

- guide to pronunciation and intonation of words & abbreviations (e.g. NATO, NASA, a.m.)
- stylistic information (e.g. formal, literary, slang) & specialist usage areas (e.g. medicine, law)
- grammatical overviews
- a collection of words under an umbrella heading / on a particular topic (often with pictures)
- useful phrases and information for writing letters, essays, etc.

Thesaurus

A thesaurus is basically a dictionary of synonyms, i.e. of words with similar or closely related meanings. It may also provide you with examples of use and antonyms. Using synonyms can make your language more specific, appropriate and lively.

Collocations Dictionaries

Collocations dictionaries can show you typical phrases, and words which most often (or only) occur together. You can find out in more detail about collocations [here](#). Missed collocations rarely hinder effective communication, but are often considered wrong by fluent speakers. Not using collocate lexical chunks can therefore lead to lower marks in assessments.

Grammar Books

In your English Studies degree, you are expected to reach C1-level competence, which includes both fluency and accuracy. To improve the grammatical accuracy of your English, it is extremely helpful to have access to a reference and a study grammar.

Reference Grammars

These are used by teachers, linguists, language students and anyone else who uses the language and needs information about how to express a certain meaning or use a certain structure. They are useful for those who already have some knowledge about how language works, and want to investigate one particular language point. Here is an example:

Ellipsis	116
<p>Ellipsis happens when we leave out (in other words, when we don't use) items which we would normally expect to use in a sentence if we followed the grammatical rules. The following examples show ellipsis. The items left out are in brackets []:</p> <p><i>I am absolutely sure [that] I have met her somewhere before.</i></p> <p>A: [Have you] Seen my gloves anywhere? B: They're in the kitchen.</p> <p><i>She sang and [she] played the violin at the same time.</i></p> <p>A: [Are] You ready yet? B: Yes. [I'm] Ready now. [I'm] Sorry to keep you waiting.</p> <p>In fact, when we use ellipsis appropriately, no one thinks we have 'left out' anything, and ellipsis is normal and very common, especially in informal conversation.</p>	<p>Carter, R., et al, <i>English Grammar Today</i> (CUP 2011)</p>

Study Grammars

These provide brief, basic explanations of how structures, tenses and other language patterns are built and used, and include examples and practice exercises. Explanations avoid jargon, making them easy to understand. These are useful for learners who are learning the language as a foreign language, without the aim of teaching it to others or doing work in linguistics in future. Here is an example:

<p>experience: passive structure We can also use <i>have/get + object + past participle</i> to talk about kinds of experience.</p> <p><i>Robin had his passport stolen in Jamaica. (OR Robin got his passport stolen ...)</i> <i>Maggie had her roof blown off in a storm. (OR Maggie got her roof blown off ...)</i></p>	
<p>3 Use have + object + past participle to write sentences.</p> <p>▶ Joe (<i>leg break</i>) in a car crash last year. <i>Joe had his leg broken in a car crash last year.</i></p> <p>1 I didn't (<i>car steal</i>) but the wheels were taken off.</p> <p>2 Have you ever (<i>letter return unopened</i>)?</p>	<p>Swan, M. & C. Walter, <i>Oxford English Grammar Course Advanced</i> (O.U.P., 2012)</p>

PLEASE REMEMBER:

In your language classes at university, we try to give you the key skills and competences you will need for your degree and your future profession. To really master the English language, though, just attending classes is nowhere near enough. You need to organise your free time to include English-language activities and self-study - for example working through some of the resources above. And make sure you have a well-stocked bookshelf!

Tips for improving your English grammar:

- Be aware of what you are reading or hearing - don't just read texts to learn the content, actively consider the constructions used and look up any new ones.
- Be aware of the similarities and differences between English and your dominant language - in many cases the grammar rules are parallel, so this will help you memorise them!
- Concentrate on your own specific problem areas during self-study. You can do a diagnostic test (these are often found in study grammars) to figure out the areas you need to work on.
- Find a tandem partner or pen-pal, and make sure you ask them to correct your mistakes!

RECOMMENDED REFERENCE WORKS

Dictionaries:

- *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Cambridge: CUP)
- *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins)
- *Concise Oxford Thesaurus* (Oxford: OUP)
- Crozier, J. & L. Gilmour, *Collins Thesaurus A-Z* (Glasgow: Harper Collins)
- *Harper Collins (PONS) German Unabridged Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins/Stuttgart: Klett)
- *Langenscheidt Großwörterbuch Collins* (Glasgow: Harper Collins)
- Lea, D. (ed), *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (Oxford: OUP)
- *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP)
- Rundell, M., *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary for Learners of English* (Basingstoke: Macmillan)
- *The Oxford-Duden German Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP)

Grammar books:

Reference grammars:

- Carter, R., M. McCarthy, G. Mark & A. O'Keeffe, *English Grammar Today* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)
- *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Glasgow: Harper Collins)
- Swan, M. *Practical English Usage* (Oxford: OUP, 2016)

Study grammars:

- Carter, R., M. McCarthy, G. Mark & A. O'Keeffe, *English Grammar Today: Workbook* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)
- *Collins Work on Your Grammar - Advanced* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2013)
- Hall, D. & M. Foley, *MyGrammarLab Advanced (with key)* (London: Pearson, 2012)
- Swan, M. & C. Walter, *Oxford English Grammar Course Advanced* (Oxford: OUP, 2012)

📌 TIP:

Get a 10% discount on the price of Oxford University Press (OUP) reference works via the Schweitzer Fachinformationen. Contact Susan Moldenhauer: s.moldenhauer@schweitzer-online.de.