

Avoiding Swenglish

Some of the most common mistakes made by Swedes in written English

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1. ABBREVIATIONS AND CONTRACTIONS

1.1 Abbreviations are normally followed by a full stop. The full stop indicates that you have cut off the end of the word.

E.g.
 Co. (**Co**/mpany)
 Prof. (**Prof**/essor)
 Ref. (**Ref**/erence)
 Fig. (**Fig**/ure)
 et al. (*et al/ii, et al/ia*, Latin meaning "and others")

Abbreviations representing organisations or countries do not have full stops, and capital letters are often used.

E.g.
 USA
 USSR
 CERN
 NFR
 EU

Abbreviations which are especially common are sometimes written as words. These are also called acronyms.

E.g.
 Nato
 Unesco

Abbreviations which have been defined in the text do not have full stops.

E.g.
 AC
 HF
 CW

Note that a full stop is **not** used after unit symbols.

E.g.
 Bq
 kg
 W

1.2 Swedish and English abbreviations

Remember that not all Swedish abbreviations can be used in English. For example, t.ex. becomes e.g. (from *exempli gratia*, which is Latin). Do not use e.g. in running text, write out, "for example", in full. Save e.g. for lists that come at the end of the sentence.

Circa, which is abbreviated c:a or ca in Swedish, is abbreviated simply by *c.* in English and is **only** used **in connection with dates**, *c.* 1897. Use *approximately*, *approx.* or *about* for the equivalent of the Swedish c:a.

The English equivalent of *det vill säga*, d.v.s. is i.e. (*id est*, also Latin).

1.3 A contraction is a word which has been shortened by leaving out some of the letters in the middle of the word. Contractions are not *normally* followed by full stops.

E.g.
Mr (Mister)
Dr (Doctor)
Figs (Figures)
Refs (References)

You will often see Mr. and Dr. written with full stops, this is the convention used in the USA and Germany, for example.

House style

Some journals have their own house style, which means that they have decided internally upon conventions for abbreviations and contractions.

For more information on abbreviations, contractions and acronyms see:

[Hints on Layout and Style](#)

2. CORRECT TRANSLATION OF SOME COMMON SWEDISH WORDS

2.1 Det finns många möjligheter..., there certainly are, but *many possibilities* is not always the best translation.

We do use the word *possibilities*, *the number of possibilities is endless*, but there are a number of other words that are better in English. Next time you are about to write *possibility(ies)* try one of the following instead.

MÖJLIGHET

ability
opportunity
chance
capacity
capability
potential
method
way
possibility

E.g.

We had the *possibility* to measure the response many times, becomes...
 We *had the opportunity of measuring* the response many times.

E.g.

The system has many *possibilities*, becomes...
 The system has *great potential/many applications*.

Another way of avoiding all these *possibilities* is to use a verbal form instead.

E.g.

This gives the *possibility* to obtain information on the mechanisms involved, becomes...
 This *makes it possible* to obtain information on...

Enable and *allow* are also good substitutes for *möjliggöra*.

2.2 Olika can be translated by *different*. *Various* would often have been a better, or more interesting choice.

E.g.

Olika metoder användes i analysen.
Various methods were used in the analysis.

2. 3 Arbete means **work**, as everyone knows, but in the case of scientific work, *study* is often more appropriate when referring to a specific project or report. *Works* in the plural form is usually used in the sense of literary works, e.g. The complete works of Shakespeare. *Work* in the general sense of effort or labour is quite acceptable.

2.4 Bedömning is also a word which is difficult to translate into English. *Judgement* is not always the right word. Try using *assessment* or *estimation* instead. *Opinion* is also appropriate in some cases.

BEDÖMNING

judgement
assessment
opinion

E.g.
My *assessment* of the situation is that...
In my *opinion*...

2.5 The literal translation of kunskap is knowledge, but this isn't always the right word. Try *experience* or *skill* instead, or even *information*.

KUNSKAP

knowledge
skill
experience
information

E.g.
One can get a lot of knowledge on detector systems through, becomes...
A great deal of *information* can be obtained on detector systems...

2.6 Behandla is a very useful Swedish word. Don't use *treat* as the English equivalent all the time. Try *analyse*, *discuss* or *deal with* instead.

BEHANDLA

treat
analyse
discuss
deal with
process

E.g.
The data were treated in the following way, becomes...
The data *were analysed* in the following way.

We will treat the topic in two sections, becomes...
We will *discuss* the topic in two sections.

3. POSSESSIVE FORMS

To form the possessive of a noun in Swedish you simply add an "s" to the end of the word. In English we add " 's". The apostrophe is very important, so don't forget it.

3.1 Singular owners

Simply add " 's"

E.g. The man's coat

The same applies in general to names.

E.g.
Murphy's law
Boyle's law

Note: Do not use "the" with the possessive form.

3.2 Names and words ending with "s"

When words or names end in "s" it is common practice **not** to add another "s" in forming the possessive. Instead, we place the apostrophe at the end of the name.

E.g.
Reynolds' number (now usually written Reynolds number)
Williams' equations
Gibbs' free energy

The reason for this is undoubtedly the difficulty in pronouncing, for example, "Reynolds's number". Some dictionaries, do however recommend placing "s" after the name.

E.g. St James's Park

3.3 Plural owners

As with other words ending in "s", the possessive form for multiple ownership is formed by adding the apostrophe only.

E.g.
The Hospital Physicists' Association
The Students' Union
The Chlorine Producers' Association

4. HYPHENATION AND WORD DIVISION

"No attempt will be made here to describe modern English usage in the matter of hyphens; its infinite variety defies description. No two dictionaries and no two sets of style rules would be found to give consistently the same advice. There is, however, one general rule... and that is that the hyphen is not an ornament but an aid to being understood, and should be employed only when it is needed for that purpose."
(From Fowler's Modern English Usage.)

This just about sums up the situation, but it may be useful to give a few examples of when and how hyphens are used.

4.1 Hyphens in compound words

Hyphens are often used when words, or prefixes and words, are joined together and unfortunate combinations of letters occur, especially two vowels.

E.g.
 electro-optical
 half-life
 non-nuclear
 pre-excited
 co-worker (*coworker* is read cow-or-ker by an English eye, Americans don't seem to have this problem!)

Nowadays the hyphen is often left out.

E.g.
 cooperation
 coordinate
 infrared

4.2 Hyphens are used when nouns or phrases are used adjectivally

E.g. a steady state, **but** a *steady-state* condition

Steady state as a noun has no hyphen, but when it is used as an adjective it does.

E.g. centre of mass, **but** *centre-of-mass* calculations

Examples of adjectival phrases with hyphens:

low-temperature measurements
 high-pressure experiments
 light-induced drift
 phonon-assisted transitions
 two-stage reactions
 three-dimensional diagrams

4.3 In general, hyphens are not used when letters and words are combined, as is usually done in Swedish.

E.g.
 npn transistor
 s electron
 d shell
 EPR studies

Exceptions to this rule are: -

X-rays (note capital X)
 γ -rays (some journals prefer to leave out the hyphen)

4.4 Hyphens can be used to show a connection

E.g.
 Hartree-Fock calculations
 Geiger-Müller tube
 spin-orbit interaction

Note that these days a dash is preferred (–) as this is readily available in word processing and layout programs.

More information on the use of hyphens and dashes can be found under Punctuation in:

[Hints on Layout and Style](#)

4.5 Word division (avstavning)

The rules for word division are different in Swedish and English, and there are, of course, many exceptions to the rules. Some dictionaries indicate possible places for word division. The following guidelines have been taken from the Collins Gem Dictionary of Spelling and Word Division.

The basis of correct English word division is that the pronunciation of the first part of the word be recognisable before the eye reaches the second part in the succeeding line.

For example; if the word *coincidence* is split thus, *co-incidence*, we know that the prefix *co-* is involved before we proceed to the next line. Splitting the word thus, *coin-cidence*, may mislead us into thinking that we are going to read a word that has to do with coins.

A split which gives *only two letters* at the beginning of the second line is *never* permissible, and one which gives *only two letters* at the end of the first line is *undesirable*, except where absolutely necessary. Once the criteria of pronunciation and style have been satisfied, etymology (the origin of the word) and familiarity must be taken into account. This means that prefixes should not be split.

E.g. ante-natal **not** an-tenatal

In addition to these guidelines, I would like to add the following which are relevant for writers who do not have English as their mother tongue. Many sounds are produced in English by the combination of two or more letters, for example -th-, -sh-, ch, -ea-, -ou- etc. **Never** split a word between these letters.

Try to split words at the natural division between syllables.

E.g. friend-li-ness

In most cases it is possible and desirable to split words with endings such as -ing, -ness, -ible, -able, etc.

E.g.
in-vig-or-at-ing
spongi-ness
de-duc-ible
de-clar-able

In some cases a word may be suitably split where double consonants appear, but not always!

E.g.
label-ling
begin-ner
begin-ning

Ap-pear is, however definitely not allowed!

Some words should not be split; *sources*, for example. *Sour-ces* misleads the reader as *sour* is a word by itself and the pronunciation is quite different from sour- in sources.

Some of the funniest word divisions I have seen have in fact been in Swedish newspapers where word division is undoubtedly done by computer. For example kung-öra and databash-antering, and did you know that Höganäs was a "känd ko-lort"?

See also: [Word division](#)

5. PREPOSITIONS

"Prepositions and particles cause more difficulty to many overseas students than any other aspect of the English language." (From J. B. Heaton, Prepositions and Adverbial Particles.) I don't think anyone would argue with that.

In some cases it is possible to use the same preposition in English as in Swedish, but far from always, that would be too easy. Here are some examples where mistakes often occur.

in analogy **to**
by analogy **with**

compare **to** (kan liknas vid) seldom what you mean (often used in AmE)
 compare **with** (jämför med) stick to **with**, it's usually what you mean

in comparison **with** (i jämförelse med)
 comparable **to** (don't ask me why)

the cost **of** – not for something
 reduced, lowered or increased **by** ...a certain amount - not with

multiply **by** - not with
 parallel **to** - *with* is also OK but less common
 probability **of** - not for
 explanation **of** - not for
 approximated **by** - not with

with respect **to**
with regard **to**
as regards
in regard **of**
in respect **of**

in the region A **to** B
from A **to** B
between A **and** B

suitable **for**
 suited **to**

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English gives the prepositions associated with verbs and nouns. For a very comprehensive list of prepositions, see Heaton's book.

6. PUNCTUATION

See also the section on punctuation in: [Hints on Layout and Style](#)

6.1 The full stop (or period in AmE)

The full stop is used to end a sentence. It is always followed by a space and a capital letter.

The full stop also plays the role of decimal point. Thus 10,5 in Swedish is written 10.5 in English. 100,000 in English is 1000 times bigger than 100,000 in Swedish, so be careful.

6.2 capital letters

Capital letters are used for proper names.

E.g.
Professor Svensson
The University of Lund
The Department of Microbiology

The days of the week, Monday, Tuesday etc., and months of the year, January, February, March, etc., are also written with capital letters.

In titles and headings, capitals are used for all words except the definite and indefinite articles ("the" and "a") and prepositions.

E.g. "Studies of the Effects of Radiation on Polymer Materials"

Note that titles and headings are **not** terminated with a full stop. When words are hyphenated in an adjectival sense, the second word does not *generally* start with a capital letter, but this is not a strict rule.

E.g. "Spectroscopic Studies Using Low-energy Photons"

When a hyphen or dash is used to indicate a connection between two separate things, then the second word **does** start with a capital letter.

E.g. "Study of the Time–Temperature Dependence in Catalytic Reactions"

6.3 Question marks

A question mark is used at the end of a direct question.

E.g. What does this mean for future experiments?

A question mark is **not** used at the end of an indirect question.

E.g. He asked what this would mean for future experiments.

6.4 An exclamation mark (exclamation point in AmE)

This is used at the end of a sentence expressing anger, amazement or other strong emotion.

E.g. What a wonderful surprise!

Note: The use of the exclamation mark is much more sparing in English than in Swedish, and would not normally be used in scientific manuscripts.

6.5 The comma

Commas are used to separate items in a list.

E.g. Compounds of silicon, germanium and phosphor...

In British English there is no comma preceding the "and" in a list, while there is in American English.

A comma is also used to divide a sentence into clauses, for example, adverbial clauses and phrases, and phrases without a verb that come before the main clause.

E.g. When the temperature is high enough, the mixture explodes.

A comma may also be used to separate an element that interrupts the sentence.

E.g. The fire, although it had been put out, was still very hot.

A clause providing the reader with extra information is often enclosed in commas, which act in the same way as parentheses.

E.g. A nitrogen laser, which was tuned at a high frequency, was used in all the experiments.

Commas are sometimes used to separate main clauses joined by a conjunction.

E.g. We were optimistic about the outcome of the experiment, but were disappointed.

Commas are used before and after adverbs. For example, "however" is always followed by a comma, and is preceded by one when it is in the middle of a clause or sentence. "Respectively", is always placed at the end of the clause and is preceded by a comma.

E.g. Mi, and Mo, refer to the masses of the ingoing and outgoing materials, respectively.

In long sentences with many clauses, it may be better to use parentheses instead of commas.

6.6 The colon

The colon may be used in two ways:

(i) after a main clause where the following statement illustrates the content of the clause:

e.g. The experiment gave erroneous results: the equipment had not been properly calibrated.

Note that a colon is not followed by a capital letter.

(ii) before a long list:

e.g. Apart from water, the basic fodder for rats should contain at least three of the following: potatoes, carrots ...

6.7 The semicolon

The semicolon is used to separate sentences that are closely related.

E.g. The series of experiments could not be completed; without power it was impossible to run the spectrograph.

A semicolon is also used in a list where commas are used within items in that list.

E.g. When using aqueous two-phase systems for bioconversions, a number of factors have to be considered: the partitioning of biocatalysts, substrates and products; the recirculation of biocatalysts; recovery of products and, finally, the reactor design.

The semicolon is used more in English than in Swedish, where a comma is often used instead.

6.8 The hyphen, -

Hyphens are used to form compound words and phrases, and in word division at the end of a line. See the chapter on hyphenation and word division for a more detailed explanation of the use of the hyphen.

6.9 The dash, – (longer than a hyphen)

Dashes can be used instead of a colon or semicolon to make writing more dramatic. It therefore goes without saying that its use in scientific papers is limited, as the whole style of scientific writing in English is rather "low key".

Dashes can also be used to indicate connections or intervals.

The dash is used in Swedish to indicate speech, in English, quotation marks are used, see below.

6.10 The apostrophe

The main use of the apostrophe is to indicate the possessive form (see the chapter on possessive forms). It has *previously* been used to form the plural of abbreviations: MP's, ADC's, etc., but this use is now diminishing.

The apostrophe is, however, also used in contractions to indicate that letters have been left out. *I'm* (= I am); *he's* (= he is); *can't* (= can not); *doesn't* (= does not); in '77 (= in 1977) etc. This form is *not recommended* in scientific papers.

Note: "it's" is the shortened form of "it is", and is *not* the possessive form of it.

6.11 Quotation marks

These are also called inverted commas or speech marks, and are used to enclose spoken words (unusual in scientific reports), or a word or phrase that is unusual, or that you have defined in your text.

E.g. The gated image intensifier can discriminate between "early" and "late" fluorescence.

There is no need to use inverted commas more than once for each "new" phrase. Once it has been defined, the reader is expected to recognise it. (Adapted from Appendix 4 of the Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English, 1981.)

7. RATHER, FAIRLY AND QUITE

If you look up "ganska" in a Swedish-English dictionary it may say any of the following: *quite*, *rather*, *fairly* or *very*. Unfortunately, these mean very different things in English. As the differences are rather subtle and quite difficult to explain, I have "borrowed" directly from Thomson & Martinet who give a very good explanation of the differences in meaning between fairly, rather and quite.

7.1 Rather and fairly

Both can mean *moderately*, but *fairly* is chiefly used with favourable adjectives and adverbs (e.g. good, well, etc.), while *rather* is chiefly used in connection with unfavourable adjectives and adverbs (e.g. bad, poorly, etc.).

E.g.

The fit to the data was *fairly* (i.e. moderately) good.

The results were, unfortunately, *rather* poor.

The indefinite article can be placed before or after *rather*:

A *rather* poor experiment, or *Rather* a poor experiment.

With *fairly* the article must come first:

A *fairly* interesting lecture, (i.e. moderately interesting)

With adjectives or adverbs such as fast, slow, thick, high, hot, cold etc., that are not in themselves either favourable or unfavourable, the speaker can express a positive opinion by using *fairly* and a negative one by using *rather*.

E.g.

The temperature was *fairly* high, (i.e. higher than we thought possible.)

The sample was *rather* thick, (i.e. it should have been a bit thinner.)

Rather can be used before alike, like, similar etc., it then means *a little* or *slightly*.

E.g. The results were *rather* worse than anticipated.

Fairly can not be used in this way.

Rather can be used before favourable adjectives and adverbs such as good, well etc., but then its meaning changes and it becomes nearly equivalent to very, the negative implication vanishes.

E.g. The model fitted the data *rather* well, (i.e. very well, better than expected.)

7.2 Quite

Quite is a confusing word as it has two meanings.

1. When used with other adjectives and adverbs, *quite* has a slightly weakening effect, so that *quite good* is less good than good.
2. Used with adjectives expressing extremes, full, wrong, etc., *quite* stresses the meaning: I thought he was *quite wrong*, i.e. he was completely wrong.

8. SAME WORD - DIFFERENT MEANING

There are actually several words in English and Swedish that are the same, or very similar, although they do not have the same meaning, or are not used in the same way in English as in Swedish.

Most people are aware that *actually* is **not** the correct translation of *aktuellt*, and that *eventually* does **not** have much to do with *eventuellt*. Here is a list of a few words that may catch you out.

Aktuellt - current, topical, pertinent, den aktuella... = the ... in question, the present...

Actually - is equivalent to the Swedish word "faktiskt" or sometimes "verkligen"

Bransch - industry, business

Branch - filial, avdelningskontor

Eventuellt - possible, possibly

Eventually - slutligen, till slut, till sist

Integritet - is not the same as "integrity" in English. The English equivalent of *kränkt personlig integritet* would be "invasion of privacy".

Integrity - soundness of character, uprightness, honesty

Isolera - with respect to cold, or electric current, use "insulate"

Isolate - to cut off, utfrysa, skilja åt, avskilja

Koncern - group

Concern - angelägenhet, bekymmer, affärsrörelse

Konkurrent - competitor

Concurrent - bidragande orsak, samtidigt

Konsekvent - consistent

Consequent - följande

Kontrollera (kolla) - check

Control - ha kontroll över, behärska

Kritik - criticism

Critic - kritiker

Pocketbok - paperback

Pocketbook - plånbok (AmE)

Överta - take over

Overtake - hinna ifatt, köra om

For correct translations of other troublesome words, from Swedish to English and vice versa, see Frykman and Kjellmer's book, "Engelskt ordbruk" or "English Synonyms and False Friends", by Hargevik and Stevens.

9. SPELLING

Stön!!!! Why can't the English spell the way it sounds? I share the sentiment. Luckily, there are hundreds of dictionaries and spell-checkers at our disposal for just this purpose. However, it is not always clear how words are spelt when endings are added to them, some words take double consonants, others don't; some words can be spelt in more than one way, even in British English, and others have different British and American spellings. The advent of the spell-checker does not necessarily mean that it is not important to know how words are spelt.

In this section on spelling, the problem is divided into 4 subgroups:

- (1) British and American variations
- (2) -ise and -ize and -yse and -yze
- (3) double consonants, and
- (4) lastly, an alphabetical list of the words most commonly misspelt.

9.1 British and American variations

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all American spellings; these are the ones I have come across. For a more complete list and background explanation go to the [spelling page of the American-British - British-American Dictionary](#).

BRITISH	AMERICAN
aetiology	etiology
aluminium	aluminum
anaemic	anemic
anaesthetic	anesthetic
analogue	analog
analyse	analyze
behaviour	behavior
caesium	cesium
catalogue	catalog
catalyse	catalyze
centre, centred	center, centered
colour	color
defence	defense
dialogue	dialog
dialyse	dialyze
faeces	feces
favour	favor
fibre	fiber
fulfil	fulfill
haemo-	hemo-
harbour	harbor
labelling, -lled	labeling, -led
labour	labor
litre	liter
metre (100 cm)	meter
mould	mold
neighbour	neighbor
odour	odor
oedema	edema
skilful	skillfull
sulphate, -phite, etc.	sulfate, -fite, etc.
through	thru
tumour	tumor
vapour	vapor

9.2 -ise and -ize and -yse and -yze

In many cases either is acceptable, but do not use more than one spelling of the same word in the same document. The Brits have now finally accepted -ize or -ise in most words. In some cases, however, only one form is correct. The **preferred** form is given first. (* = American spelling)

advertise	organize or -ise
analyse (-yze*)	polarize or -ise
crystallize or -ise	revise
generalize or -ise	solubilize or -ise
homogenize or -ise	specialize or -ise
hydrolyse (-yze*)	standardize or -ise
ionize or -ise	summarize or -ise
localize or -ise	televise

See also the first section of: [Hints on Layout and Style](#)

and [-ise and -ize](#).

9.3 Double consonants

The general rule is that -l- and -r- become -ll- and -rr- when -ed and -ing are added to the word. In American English, however, unstressed consonants do not become double with -ed and -ing.

Here are a few examples of commonly encountered words in science and medicine. (* = American spelling.)

channel	channelled	channelling
control	controlled	controlling
label	labelled	labelling
label	(labeled*)	labeling*)
mar	marred	marring
model	modelled	modelling
model	(modeled*)	modeling*)
occur	occurred	occurring
parallel	paralleled	paralleling
prefer	preferred	preferring
refer	referred	referring
repel	repelled	repelling
stir	stirred	stirring
crystal	crystallize	crystalline
inflamm	inflammation	inflammatory

9.4 Words commonly misspelt, with some attempts at explanations

address	two d's (not one, as in Swedish) and two s's
being	not beeing, do not be misled by seeing
centre	not center*
continuous	from continu(e) + ous
fulfil	one l plus one l, fulfill is American
fulfilled	double consonant with endings

words ending in -ful end in ful, with one l and not -full with two l's

-ful	E.g. careful helpful meaningful useful
homogeneity	don't forget the e before the i at the end otherwise you don't get the long e sound
homogeneous	don't forget the e before -ous
horizontal	always z, not s as in Swedish
interval	one l, not two as in Swedish
labelled	double consonant in British English
literature	one t, not two as in Swedish
measurable	the silent e is removed when -able is added
parallel	two l's then one l
personnel	two n's, one l, not the other way around
phosphorus	not phosphor-ous
precede	the long e sound comes from the -ede combination
preceded	only one e in the middle
preceding	only one e in the middle
proceed	the long e sound is made by the -eed combination, not -ede as in precede
proceeding(s)	two e's necessary as i shortens the vowel sound
procedure	the u after the d acts in the same way as an e
procedural	the silent e after the r is removed when endings beginning with a are added
referred	double consonants
straightforward	one word, not two
symmetrical	two m's
then	don't confuse <i>än</i> with then just because they sound alike (större <i>än</i> = larger/greater <i>than</i>)
transferred	double consonant

10. SINGULAR OR PLURAL VERB?

One of the worst mistakes you can make in English is having the wrong verb form in the third person in the present tense and with irregular verbs.

Remember: in the present tense in the third person (he, she, it and they)

Singular subject ----> verb stem plus **s**, *it fits, he sits*

Plural subject ----> verb stem without s, *they sit*

E.g. The filter *papers sit* on a frame and *the frame rests* on the flange of the chamber.

It is more common for the "s" in the singular form to be forgotten than for an extra "s" to appear in the plural form, but they are both equally serious mistakes. Writing *is* instead of *are* (and *was* instead of *were*) or vice versa, is even worse. Such mistakes make an Englishman cringe.

If you suspect that you have a tendency to make this kind of mistake, check each clause and look for the *subject* and its associated *verb*. If the subject is **singular**, check for the "s". Remember that the subject is not always the noun closest to the verb.

E.g. The concentration (singular subject) of Cs in 27 samples was (singular verb) determined.

Note: *samples* is not the subject!

You may be forgiven in some cases. It isn't always clear whether the subject is singular or plural. Here are a few examples of tricky singulars and plurals.

- * *A number* of (i.e. several) measurements *have* been made.
- * *The number* (singular) of units *has* been reported to be 50.
- * It appears that *30 g* (plural) *are* required daily.
- * In some areas *60%* (%=singular) of the workforce *is* unemployed.
- * *The most part* (singular) of the compounds *is* inactive.
- * *A total* (singular) of 32 measurements *has* been made.
- * *The majority* (i.e. most) of the tests *were* performed in Lund.

* Kinetics, dynamics, politics and other words ending in -ics and meaning "the study of..." usually take a singular verb.

E.g.

Acoustics is the study of the behaviour of sound.

In other cases, they take a plural verb.

E.g.

The acoustics in this hall *are* terrible.

Neither, **nor** and **none** are treated as singular.

- * *Neither* the slope nor the magnitude *was* reproduced by the model.
- * *Neither* of the models *was* correct.
- * *None* of the fits to the data *was* adequate.

Other tricky cases

* *The liquid, together with the vapour, returns* to the chamber. Here the subject of the clause is "the liquid" not "the liquid and the vapour".

It sometimes helps to rearrange the sentence if you're not sure which verb form to use.

* *The liquid returns* to the chamber, together with the vapour. OR

* *The liquid and the vapour return* to the chamber. (Not as interesting but it says what you mean.)

See also: [Singular or Plural Verb?](#)

11. STYLE, GRAMMAR AND STUFF LIKE THAT

As is often said, "It is outside the scope of this work...", and it is certainly far outside the scope of this work to review English grammar, and far be it for me to give advice on style, to each his own. BUT, a number of mistakes crop up quite frequently, and here is as good a place as any to put them right.

11.1 "In Paper III we used strong acid solutions to dissolve the samples."

My reaction to that is that it was a miracle you didn't dissolve the paper as well. You do not do things or carry out experiments in papers. Papers are a means of describing investigations, experimntal or theoretical, and reporting the results; i.e. a means of spreading information. It may be longer and more cumbersome, but you must say instead:

"In the experiments described in Paper III, strong acid solutions were used."

11.2 The American language continues to influence the written word, especially in the fields of science, and even I agree that this is not entirely bad! However, please avoid writing headings such as "Experimental". Experimental is an adjective, it's like saying Accidental. If you wish to describe the experimental *techniques* or *methods* used in your work, say so. The same applies to "Theoretical".

11.3 In Swedish there is a tendency to say things backwards; by this I mean, for example,

Från lutningen av dessa linjer kunde beta-värdet bestämmas.

This is not the way English is written. The most important thing in this sentence is *the value of beta*. Start with the subject, the important material, then go on to say how, when, where and why.

The value of beta was calculated from the slopes of the lines.

11.4 Where to put the adverb, *never*, *sometimes*, *previously*, etc.

In Swedish there are rules governing the position of the adverb in a sentence, as there are in English, and it's hardly ever the same place! Here are a few examples to help you get it right.

The adverb is always placed *after the verb to be*.

E.g. The samples are *always* stored at -10°C.

The adverb is placed *before other verbs*.

E.g. The peaks *rarely* appeared in the same position.

With *auxiliary verbs*, *have*, *should*, etc., the adverb should *always* be placed *after the first auxiliary verb*.

12. WHICH OR THAT?

Both can be used at the beginning of relative clauses (bisatser).

12.1 Which can only refer back to inanimate objects, while **that** can refer back to a person or a thing.

Which is used in non-defining clauses (ej nödvändiga bisatser).

E.g.

The river, *which* is tidal at Stratford, is dangerous.

This book, *which* was written by Strindberg, is excellent.

Note that these sentences make sense without the relative clause, i.e. it is a non-defining clause, and that the relative clauses are surrounded by commas.

12.2 That is used at the beginning of a defining clause (nödvändig bisats)

E.g.

The river *that* flows through London is called the Thames.

This is the book *that* Strindberg wrote.

Note that these relative clauses are not enclosed in commas and that the sentences would not make much sense without them.

RULE OF THUMB

A defining relative clause (a *that* clause) forms an integral part of the sentence and cannot be put within parentheses, whereas a non-defining relative clause (a *which* clause) can be put within parentheses and its removal from the sentence would not render the sentence meaningless.

See also: [Which or That?](#)

13. WHILE AND WHEREAS

13.1 The true meaning of the word *while* is "at the same time as".

A common modern usage of the word *while* is, however, as a "formal word" or an "elegant variation" of *and*.

E.g. The first sample was analysed immediately, *while* the second was frozen at -20°C.

In this case, *and* would have done just as well.

13.2 *Whereas* is used in contrasts

E.g. The Einstein model includes relativistic effects, *whereas* the Smith model does not.

Note: In American English, *whereas* is used in much the same way as *while* in British English.

14. UNCOUNTABLES

Uncount nouns or things not usually counted

(From the Collins Cobuild English Grammar, HarperCollins, 1993, ISBN 0 00 370257 X)

Some nouns refer to general things such as qualities, substances, processes and topics rather than to individual items or events. These nouns have only one form, are not used with numbers, and are not usually used with the determinants, "the", "a" or "an".

E.g.

He has experience of working abroad...

Many kinds of waste water...

Fermentation was carried out under various conditions...

When using an uncountable noun as the subject of a verb, you must use the singular form of the verb.

E.g. The equipment was installed in a large hall.

A list of some common uncount nouns

advice (some)	evidence (a great deal of)	paper
agreement	faith	permission
agriculture	fermentation	power
atmosphere	finance	progress
behaviour (types of)	food (foodstuffs)	proof (a great deal of)
cancer	fouling	rain
collaboration	furniture	research
cooperation	growth	sand (kinds of)
comfort	health	security
cost	impact	sewage
cultivation	industry	status
death	information	teaching
damage	intelligence	time (little)
earth	justice	trade
education	knowledge	traffic
electricity	labour	transport (modes of)
emission*	machinery	treatment*
energy	money	waste*
equipment	nature	water
experience	news	work

* Now being used in the plural form

Quantifying uncountable nouns

Uncountable nouns can be quantified using expressions such as: *little, much, some, kinds of, types of* etc., see above.

Uncountable nouns ending in "...s"

Such nouns often refer to subjects of study or activities.

acoustics classics logistics politics
aerobics economics mathematics statistics
aerodynamics electronics mechanics thermodynamics
aeronautics genetics obstetrics
athletics linguistics physics

Some of these nouns are occasionally used as plural nouns, especially when talking about a person's work or activities:

E.g. His politics are clearly right-wing.

See also: [Uncountables](#)

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