



# USES AND ABUSES OF ENGLISH

**An English style guide for (Danish)  
university administrative staff**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
COPENHAGEN

## Introduction – using English in a university administrative context

The Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP) was set up in 2008 in response to the challenges of increasing internationalisation at the University of Copenhagen. CIP is a language competence development, research and resource centre; among its many tasks are running a wide variety of language courses and workshops for academic and administrative/technical staff and students at the University.

This handbook is based on material culled from running courses for university administrative staff for some 11 years. It is intended as a reference and practice guide to help you better meet the language challenges of working in English in a university administrative environment in Denmark. The main focus is on the technical vocabulary used, but it also includes sections on email writing and common aspects of grammar. The book also lists some useful online tools for improving and supporting your English skills. It contains authentic examples taken from actual university administrative situations as well as useful exercises that will give you a chance to practice the areas covered. An answer key is provided at the end of the handbook.

This is not an academic book: it is designed for non-native (primarily Danish) speakers of English working in a university administrative environment to help you tighten up on (read: correct!) some of the very common errors that are made when speaking/writing English.

I have tried to keep explanations simple in an attempt quickly and easily to clear up the most common areas of confusion surrounding English in a university administrative context. Enjoy!



**Pete Westbrook**  
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## 1. General rules of thumb

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- **English likes to be specific!** Danish has words that can be used in a wide variety of contexts; English tends to want to be more specific. A classic example is the Danish word *dommer*. This can be used in all sorts of contexts, so you'll use *dommer* whether you're talking about a court, a football match, a tennis match or an industrial tribunal. In English, however, each of these contexts would use a different (more specific) word: *judge*, *referee*, *umpire* or *arbitrator*, respectively. So watch out - there are a lot of words in Danish that will have several different translatable forms in English depending on the exact context the word is to be used in. If in doubt, check!
- **English loves verbs!** So try and avoid 'heavy' noun constructions, which seem to be more common in Danish. Rather than say: *make a registration here*, you simply write: *please register here!*
- **Keep compound nouns separate!** While Danish tends to form compound nouns as one word, English prefers keeping words apart – even in (most) compound nouns. So *grupperum* would be *group room*, *kreditkort* is *credit card*, *bacheloruddannelser* is *bachelor programmes* - and so on. Of course, being English there are exceptions: *toothbrush*, *weekend*, *thunderstorm* and so on, but you get the idea.
- **Remember your plurals!** They are usually formed by adding 's' or 'es' to the noun – (*one swan/two swans*, *one kiss/two kisses*, etc.). Not always (think of *sheep/sheep* and *child/children*), but usually – so don't forget them! A good strategy is to go back and check that all your plural 's's are in place once you've finished your email/text.
- **Not everything is translatable!** Many words can be translated directly from Danish to English, but there are also a lot of terms/expressions that cannot be translated so easily. This is especially true of a university as some concepts are simply not found in equivalent institutions in the UK or US. For example, an expression like "faglighed" is notoriously difficult to translate; there are simply a whole raft of possibilities depending on the context (see the first bullet point above). Your best bet here would be to look it up in the University's own dictionary KU Lex (see the Useful Links section below).



## 2. Email Do's and Don'ts

This is a kind of roundup of what, in my experience, are the most common errors that people make when writing emails in English. Hopefully, this will act as a guide to weed out the worst offenders, so you can concentrate on the content of your email instead of worrying about petty errors.

### Don'ts

#### Be aware:

Don't use *Please be aware that...* or *for that matter Please notice that...* No – to notice something does mean to become aware of it, but what you need is a word meaning to pay particular attention to something and remember it.

#### Capital letters:

Don't use small letters to start words which start with a capital letter in English (there are several differences!) and don't do the opposite – for example, note that there is no equivalent form of the Danish *De* in English. So don't write *you* with a capital letter.

#### Comma before 'that':

Don't put a comma before *that*. Ever. If you're in any doubt at all, check the punctuation rules opposite.

### Do's

#### What to do instead:

Do use *Please note that...* if you want to draw someone's attention to something particularly important in an email.

#### What to do instead:

Do use capital letters when appropriate, i.e. for the following:  
Titles: Mr, Ms, Prof. etc.  
Days of the week: Monday, Friday etc.  
Months: January, February etc.  
Nationalities: Danish, French etc.  
Languages: English, Swahili etc.

#### What to do instead:

Do follow these punctuation rules:

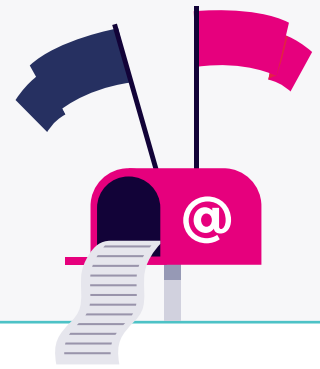
#### **Rule 1: when to put a comma before 'that'.**

You put a comma before *that* in the following situations:

a) Never.

That's it!

Seriously: how difficult can it be? Say 3 times before you go to bed:  
NEVER put a comma before *that*.



## Don'ts

### Dates:

Don't put a dot to indicate an ordinal number (like you do in Danish as in *den 9. juni*):

- \*9. june
- \* the 1. floor

And while we're on dates, don't write *the* and *of* in a date: *\*the 2nd of June 2019*.

If this is earth-shattering news to you, look no further than the DO section to find out how to write dates properly and safely. →

## Do's

### What to do instead:

Do write dates like this! – I know you can find this on KU Net, but it doesn't take up much space and it's easy so I thought I'd include it.

- 9 June 2019*
- 9th June 2019*
- June 9, 2019*
- June 9th, 2019*

Actually, the protocol at UCPH is to leave the ordinal *th* (or *1st*, *2nd*, *3rd*) off. This of course makes it easier for you – guarding against you writing: *I'll see you on the 2th of March...* the tooth of March? And do please remember to use a capital letter with months. Note that if you don't, Word will underline your month with a wiggly red line. And you don't really want that, do you?

And if you need to write, for example, which floor you work on, write it in one of the following two ways:

- 1st floor, 15th floor*
- First floor, fifteenth floor*

### Decimal points:

Don't use a comma and decimal point as in Danish when writing numbers and currencies.

### What to do instead:

The mathematical formula Pi in English is 3.142 NOT 3,142 (as it would be in Danish) – in English this is three thousand one hundred and forty-two!

And when writing currencies, it's safest to put the currency symbol before the amount (still remembering to be careful with your points and commas):

- DKK 6,762.50
- EUR 1,999.00

Rule of thumb: the comma and point are exactly the other way round than the Danish (and the rest of Europe) system. By the way, this goes for US and UK English (if you were wondering).

### For example:

Don't use the abbreviations *f.eks./f.ex.* for *for example*.

### What to do instead:

Do use the correct English abbreviation for *for example*: *e.g.* – makes no sense to you? It's because technically *e.g.* is the abbreviation for the Latin *exempli gratia*, which means *for example*. So it actually does make sense. Sort of.

### Hereby:

Don't use it – at all! I suppose technically it is a translation of *hermed*, but it is simply not used in the same way. In English, *hereby* is only used in very formal contracts. Avoid it (unless you happen to be writing a very formal contract).

### What to do instead:

Do use expressions like:

- I am pleased to inform you that...*
- Please find attached...*
- I am sending you...*

For more standard email phrases, see Appendix 1.



## Don'ts

### Inform/tell:

Don't *inform* or *tell* without an object (a person/people/group of people) you're *informing/telling*.

### I will return:

Don't use *I will return to you* when promising to give a reply to an email. This means that you will physically return to the recipient in person.

### Kindly:

Don't use *We kindly ask you to...* for requesting someone to do something. This seems to be a hazardous area for Danish speakers of English, so move swiftly over to the DO section. You might consider avoiding the word *kindly* altogether actually.

### Send/sent:

Don't mix up *send/sent* + *spend/spent*

## Do's

### What to do instead:

Do remember that you always have to *inform* or *tell* SOMEONE – you can't go round *informing* or *telling* into empty space; there has to be a person on the receiving end of what you're *informing/telling* them about (more technically they are both transitive verbs, meaning they always require an object – which you don't really need to know unless you are explaining the rule to someone else and want to show off a bit). So: *I am writing to inform YOU about.../ Can you tell ME more about..? / WE have been informed that...*

### What to do instead:

Do use *get back to* as in *I'll get back to you as soon as possible*.

### What to do instead:

Do use the following standard phrases (or something very similar) for making requests (in ascending order of politeness):

- *I wonder if it would be possible for you to...  
(maybe a little over the top polite)*
- *We would be grateful if you could...*
- *Please could you...*
- *Do you mind...*
- *Can you...*

### What to do instead:

Do learn the grammar rules governing the difference between *send* and *sent*. The verb is *to send*.

So use *send* in the following tenses:

Infinitive (*navnemåde*): *I need to send an email to Agatha.*

Present (*nutid*): *I send a lot of emails every day.*

Future (*fremtid*): *I'll send you the book this afternoon.*

Use *sent* for these tenses:

Past (*datid*): *I sent the application last week.*

Present perfect (*førnutid*): *Have you sent your mother a birthday card yet?*

Passive (*passiv*): *Your passport is being sent by courier.*



## Exercise 2.1

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### Email errors

*Applying what you learned from the Email Do's and Don'ts above, spot and correct the 13 errors in the following email. Remember to check everything – capital letters, numbers, verb forms, compound nouns, vocabulary, punctuation... You can check your answers with the Key to Exercises on pp 23-26.*

Dear mr Ashbury

Thank you for your email of the 16. of may 2019 about the forthcoming 'Excellent Emails' conference. I hereby sent the english registration form You asked for. Please notice, that the deadline for submitting the form is the end of this month.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that you need to pay a conference fee of 1.050,- kr. We kindly ask you to pay this as soon as possible. You can pay by banktransfer or creditcard.

Regarding your question about accommodation, I will return to you on friday with some hotels you can contact.

We look forward to receiving your completed registration form.

Regards

Rose Tompkins



### 3. Vocabulary – a word in your ear...

There are a lot of words that are very similar between Danish and English (*mand-man, hus-house, vest-west*), but there are obviously a lot more words that are different. In this section, we present four vocabulary areas that commonly present problems when going from Danish to English, namely: **a) Tricky translations**, **b) Confusing pairs**, when it's hard to know which of two apparently similar words to use in English, **c) Collocations**, which form frequent word partnerships, and **d) False friends**, words that look and sound the same in Danish and English, but which do not share the same meaning.

#### a) Tricky translations

This section looks at some common examples of Danish expressions that are particularly tricky to find a satisfactory translation for in English. This tends to arise either because the Danish word is translated into several different words in English, depending on the context, or because the Danish term is simply not used in the same way in English.

##### *I forbindelse med*

A very common expression in Danish, which is used in a multitude of contexts. Following the general rule of thumb: English likes to be specific, this would only rarely be translated as *in connection with* in English – actually typically when people have been arrested or when you're replying to an email for a particular reason:



*A man has been arrested in connection with the murder.*



*I'm writing to you in connection with your recent job application.*

However, in other contexts, try and use an expression that more precisely describes the relationship between the two parts of the sentence:



*He took charge of the family business in connection with his father's death.*



*He took charge of the family business following his father's death.*



*Most foreigners did their shopping in the main town in connection with their language classes.*



*Most foreigners did their shopping in the main town, where they had their language classes.*



**Kursusansvarlig**

It makes no sense at all to translate this very common university administrative title word for word in English (which would be *\*the course responsible*). The correct translation is *course coordinator* (for the administrative member of staff) or *course director* (for the academic member of staff).



*the course responsible*



*the course coordinator*



*the course director*

**Mulighed:**

*Mulighed* is a word that is used in a huge number of contexts in Danish. Sometimes you can – as you are no doubt tempted to do – translate it to *possibility* in English. But folks, you need to be very careful because more often than not it will not be *possibility*, which is used in far more limited contexts in English.

There are basically three ways to translate *mulighed*:

1. *opportunity* (or chance): a time when a particular situation makes it possible to do or achieve something as in: *The offer was too good an opportunity to miss.*
2. *option*: something that you can **choose** to have or do – the key word here being ‘choose’, as in: *Students have the option of studying abroad in their second year.*
3. *possibility*: something that might or might not happen – but then normally it’s best to use possible rather than the noun *possibility*, e.g. *Frost is possible, but unlikely, at this time of year.* Never use the expression *have the possibility to*; what you probably mean is just *can*.



*You have the possibility to pay by credit card.*



*You can pay by credit card.*

**Prøve at gøre**

In English, you only *try something* actively, in the sense of to use, do or test something in order to see if it is good, suitable, etc. e.g. *Have you ever tried windsurfing?* But in the sense it is often used in Danish – that something has happened to you or that you have experienced something – you would use a different expression in English. For example:

Danish: *Har du prøvet at brække din arm?* It is ridiculous to say: *Have you ever tried to break your arm* – unless of course you mean that you have actively attempted to inflict a serious injury upon yourself.

Use simply: *Have you ever broken your arm?* Actually, apparently in some languages this would also mean self-inflicted harm, so it just shows: you can't be too careful.

**Økonomi:**

1. *Economy* – if (and only if) you're talking about the the relationship between production, trade and the supply of money in a particular country or region e.g. *the Danish economy, the global economy, etc.*
2. *Finance* – if what you actually mean is to just do with money (money coming in, money going out, raising money). So you would talk about your *personal finances* not your *personal economy*.
3. *Economics* – if you're referring to the subject studied (e.g. at university).

**Exercise 3.1**

How would you change the highlighted parts of the following sentences?

- a) Jørgen Klopp's Liverpool team has never **tried to lose** a match at this football ground.
- b) The position of Parish priest needs to be filled temporarily **in connection with** maternity leave.
- c) The **course responsible** and the study board are responsible for teaching on the courses.
- d) Tristan Otto, the so-called king of dinosaurs, will be exhibited in Copenhagen in April, giving Danes the **possibility** of getting right up close with one of the world's most complete Tyrannosaurus skeletons.
- e) You have two **possibilities**: go back to jail or stay here on the island.
- f) Peter Fich is responsible for the company's **economy**, accounts, IT and HR.
- g) Birgitte also told us that she was studying **economy** at evening school.

## b) Confusing pairs

This section is in a way the opposite of the previous section (tricky translations) in that it covers pairs of English words whose respective meanings are often hard to tease apart. This might be because the pairs of words look and sound similar to each other or because they are both translated into the same word in Danish.

### **Costumer/customer**

Both perfectly good words, but you'll more than likely be wanting to use the second one, unless you happen to work at a theatre and need someone to make or hire out some costumes for you. So, I'm assuming you'll usually need customer – check the spelling: C.U.S.T.O.M.E.R.!

### **Demand/requirement**

Both these words can be used to translate *krav*, but there is a big difference in meaning. *Demands* are very firm requests for something or something that somebody needs or feels they need. Usually, the word you'll need is *requirement*, or the verb *require*.

### **Dispensation/exemption**

Technically there is a difference, although in a university context there is a tendency to use them completely interchangeably and randomly. So let's have a look: *Dispensation* is permission to do something you normally wouldn't be allowed to do – for example to have a fourth attempt at passing an exam.

*Exemption* is kind of the opposite: official permission not to do something or pay something that you would normally have to do or pay, e.g. *She was given exemption from the final examination*. So now you know. Let's see if we can introduce the two concepts properly to the rest of the university...

### **Examinator/examiner**

This is quite easy as *examinator* is not an English word at all (hence the wiggly red line when you try to write it in a Word document, for example). So stick to *examiner*. And remember not to use *ensor* in an exam context (see Section 3d below).

### **If/in case**

Consider the following two sentences and assume it's not raining (bear with me – this will make sense when you read the sentences):

- a) I'll take my umbrella IF it rains.
- b) I'll take my umbrella IN CASE it rains.

Which sentence a) or b) will result in you taking your umbrella with you when it's not raining?  
 Answer: sentence b). *If* is dependent on a particular condition (it raining) whereas *in case* is anticipating something possibly changing later (it starting to rain, even though it isn't raining at the moment).

Please note that *in case* should not be confused with *in case of* as in *in case of fire...* which specifically refers to the situation when the building is actually on fire. Then you don't need to worry about the difference between *if* and *in case* anyway – you just need to get the hell out of there.

### **Insure/ensure**

Who can honestly say they've never made this mistake? *Insure* is to do with insurance companies, buying cover for if and when you lose something/your house is broken into/you accidentally run over the neighbour's cat and they are seeking damages... *Ensure*, on the other hand, is merely being certain that something happens or is done.

### **Number/amount**

This perhaps should have been in the grammar section, as the only difference between these two words is that one – *number* - is used for countable nouns (*a number of chairs, mercats, hovercrafts*) and the other (*amount*) isn't – it's used for uncountable nouns (*an amount of information, advice, rice, time*).



## **Exercise 3.2**

**Sample sentences for you to tease apart: which of the two highlighted options should you choose in each sentence?**

- a) The car is insured/ensured against fire and theft.
- b) Please insure/ensure that all lights are switched off before you leave.
- c) We have already spent a huge number/amount of time on the project.
- d) A large number/amount of people have applied for the job.
- e) I'll let you know if/in case anyone calls about the house.
- f) You'd better take the keys if/in case I'm out when you come home.
- g) The papers are sent to external examinators/examiners.
- h) Improving customer/costumer satisfaction is a core company strategy.
- i) She needed a special exemption/dispensation to remarry.
- j) She was given exemption/dispensation from taking the final examination.
- k) What is the minimum entry demand/requirement for this course?

### c) Collocations (word partnerships):

You don't necessarily have to learn the word 'collocations', but the concept is very useful for anyone learning a foreign or additional language. It merely means 'word partnerships', referring to the concept that certain words 'go together' while other combinations simply don't 'sound right'. In Danish you can say you can *løse en opgave*; however, in English you cannot say: *solve a task*, even though you would probably be understood if you did. But you would be more likely to say you *solve a problem* and *do/carry out a task*.

Collocations can take the form of different combinations of 'content' words: verb-noun (*make a difference*), adjective-noun (*major problem*), verb-adverb (*argue convincingly*), adverb-adjective (*bitterly cold*), and focusing on collocations will help you sound more correct, but also it will enable you to be more precise in your language.

As there are thousands of collocations, it would be impossible to list them all here. But if you're not sure of the collocations that go with a particular word, you can look them up in (surprise, surprise) a collocations dictionary. Oxford Collocations Dictionary is now available free at: <http://www.freecollocation.com/>

Anyway, try the following exercise and if you're not sure of the collocations, look them up and then check the key at the end of the handbook.



## Exercise 3.3

Put the verbs in the box in the most appropriate gaps in the sentences below (note: you may need to change the verb in some way to fit the sentence):

appoint	do	make
attend	hold	solve
comply	join	take on

- All members of staff are obliged to \_\_\_\_\_ the departmental meeting.
- Nobody was willing to \_\_\_\_\_ such a thankless task.
- I'm sorry, I forgot to \_\_\_\_\_ my homework this week.
- My cousin has decided to \_\_\_\_\_ the army.
- I think we need to \_\_\_\_\_ a few changes to the plan.
- If we don't \_\_\_\_\_ this problem soon, we'll have to abandon the project.
- The election was \_\_\_\_\_ earlier this year.
- It is the head of department who \_\_\_\_\_ the assessment committee.
- All furniture must \_\_\_\_\_ with fire safety regulations.

### d) False friends:

'False friends' are English words that look and/or sound similar to a word in Danish, but which actually mean something (entirely) different.

A common example in a university context is the Danish word  *censor* , which has a 'false friend' in English:  *censor*  (believe it or not). But the word  *censor*  in English is nothing to do with exams – it refers to a person whose job is to examine books, films/movies, etc. and remove parts which are considered to be offensive, immoral or a political threat.

Some other examples of false friends are as follows (colour coded with Danish words in red and English words in blue):

False friends	Danish	English
<i>annonce</i> ≠ announcement	<i>annonce</i> <i>meddelelse</i>	advertisement announcement
<i>chef</i> ≠ chief	<i>chef</i> <i>ansfører/overhoved</i>	manager/boss chief
<i>formular</i> ≠ formula	<i>formular</i> <i>opskrift/formel</i>	form formula
<i>kollega</i> ≠ college	<i>kollega</i> <i>uddannelsessted</i>	colleague college
<i>kontrollere</i> ≠ control	<i>kontrollere</i> <i>styre</i>	check control
<i>rente</i> ≠ rent	<i>rente</i> <i>husleje</i>	interest rent
<i>skema</i> ≠ scheme	<i>skema</i> <i>ordning</i>	schedule/diagram/timetable scheme
<i>sky</i> ≠ sky	<i>sky</i> <i>himmel</i>	cloud sky



## Exercise 3.4

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Which of the two highlighted options is correct in the following sentences:

- a) Please check/control that you have included all documentation with your application.
- b) I'm not so keen on the job, but I've got a great set of colleges/colleagues.
- c) We ask everyone to read and sign the consent forms/formulas.
- d) I need to put the job advertisement/announcement on the website.
- e) This is a high-yield investment account that pays a lot of rent/interest, but is risky.
- f) We get a new scheme/timetable each semester.
- g) I'll ask my boss/chief if I can have the day off tomorrow.



## 4. Grammar – keep calm and tense your verbs

### a) Uncountable nouns (navneord):

Most nouns you can count, so you can say, for example, *I've got 2 bicycles, 3 cats and a snake* (lucky old you). However, there are some nouns you can't count. These are called – surprise, surprise – 'uncountable nouns', and there are a lot of them in English. Obvious examples include *happiness, rice, blood, music*, etc. So you cannot say: *I've got 3 happinesses today* or *Who put 276 rices on my plate?* They don't make sense. Less obvious, but actually more common are the following uncountable nouns:

- information
- advice
- money
- furniture
- news

There are also some do's and don'ts with uncountable nouns:

### Don'ts

**You can't do the following with uncountable nouns:**

- Put a number before them (as we've just seen)
- Put *a/an* in front of them
- Use 'countable' words like *many*
- Make them plural (so no *s* on the end)

### Do's

**So what can you do with them?**

- Keep them singular – in fact they always take the 3rd person singular verb form (*has, is, takes*, etc.)
- Put *some, any, not much, a little, a lot* in front of them
- Use *a... of* expressions to 'make' them countable. For example, *a bowl/packet/grain of rice* or *a piece of information*.

NB: **Travel** (the noun) means 'travelling in general' and is uncountable, so you can't say *\*a travel*. If you want to say this, use the word *trip* instead, e.g. *How was your trip to France?*

### b) I am born...

...not unless you're a born-again Christian, you're not: *I am (re)born – praise the Lord!* No, this is something that presumably happened in the (usually relatively distant) past, so in English you use the past – *I WAS born to love you/Bruce Springsteen WAS born in the USA/The twins WERE born at 3 o' clock this morning*.



### c) Look forward to doing

The short explanation: when using the construction *look forward to*, always follow the *to* with a verb in the -ing form. *I'm looking forward to **correcting** that mistake* / *Looking forward to **getting** it right* / *We look forward to **reading** your perfect emails*. Got it?

The long explanation: there is (as far as I know) only one 100% rule in English, and that is: when a preposition is followed by a verb, the verb will always be in the -ing form. In the expression *I look forward to*, the *to* is actually a preposition, so, hey presto! – it's followed by the -ing form. For more information, follow this link to Pete's Corner on this topic on the CIP website: [https://cip.ku.dk/kursuskatalog/petes-corner\\_dk](https://cip.ku.dk/kursuskatalog/petes-corner_dk)

### d) Tenses 1: *I do* versus *I am doing*

Danes have a tendency to overuse the *I am doing* form, as in:



Most students are submitting their assignments by email.



Most students submit their assignments by email.

So what are the differences in the usage of the two forms? Check out the table below, and if it makes sense try the exercises.

#### *I do* (*simpel tid*)

Key words: usually, always, never, occasionally

##### Timeline for *I do*:

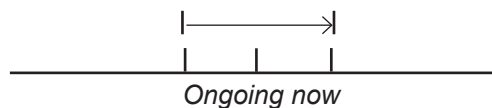


Functions	Examples
1. General situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sara works at CIP</li> <li>• I live in Ballerup</li> </ul>
2. Repeated, regular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I play tennis every Saturday morning</li> <li>• We go to my parents every Christmas</li> </ul>
3. Permanent situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I live in Valby</li> <li>• The moon goes round the earth</li> </ul>

#### *I am doing* (*udvidet tid*)

Key words: at the moment, at present, currently, today, this week

##### Time line for *I am doing*:



Functions	Examples
1. Activities happening now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What language are those people speaking?</li> </ul>
2. Activities happening 'around now' – in progress at the time of speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm working on an interesting project at the moment</li> </ul>
3. Temporary situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheila is staying with her sister until she finds a flat.</li> </ul>

**Stative verbs:**

What might also be very useful for you to be aware of is that some verbs are **not** normally used in the present continuous (*I am doing*) form. These are typically verbs that describe some kind of 'feeling' or 'state' (hence the name: *stative*) and include the following:

*believe, belong, contain, dislike, doubt, hate, impress, know, like, love, mean, need, owe, own, prefer, resemble, seem, suppose, surprise, understand, want, wish.*

So here's the wrong and right ways of using these verbs:



*I'm believing in him.*



*I believe in him.*



*I'm not belonging here.*



*I don't belong here.*



*He's owning a big house.*



*He owns a big house.*

That's why English speakers hate (note, not *they are hating...*) the McDonald slogan '*I'm loving it!*' McDonald's have hijacked this particular English grammar point and twisted it to make it their own. Fiendishly clever...!



## Exercise 4.1

### Simpel tid (I do) versus udvidet tid (I am doing)

Complete the following sentences with the correct form (*I do* or *I am doing*) of the verb in brackets. Remember the 'stative' verbs mentioned above (that you can't use in the continuous form):

- She (study) \_\_\_\_\_ hard for her exams at the moment.
- Alex never (break) \_\_\_\_\_ a promise or (let down) \_\_\_\_\_ a friend.
- I'll be with you in a minute. I (just finish) \_\_\_\_\_ something in the kitchen.
- At weekends, she frequently (drive) \_\_\_\_\_ up to her mother's in Liverpool, and (spend) \_\_\_\_\_ an evening with her sister on the way back.
- She (jog) \_\_\_\_\_ around the park three times a week.
- He (commute) \_\_\_\_\_ to Paris every day this week.
- I'm a bit worried about Greg. He (work) \_\_\_\_\_ too hard in his present job. He really (need) \_\_\_\_\_ a holiday.
- I (know) \_\_\_\_\_ her husband (look for) \_\_\_\_\_ a new job at the moment.

### e) Tenses 2: *I did* versus *I have done*

The Danish present perfect (*førnutid*), e.g. *have/has read/eaten/gone*, can be used to refer to a specific time in the past, leading to mistakes like:

 *Charles Dickens has written many novels.*

 *She has left school in 1982.*

In English, this type of time reference requires simple past (*datid*):

 *Dickens wrote many novels.*

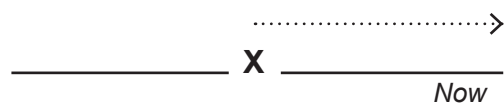
 *She left school in 1982.*

So to distinguish between them, apply the following laughingly simple rules:

#### **I have done** (*førnutid*)

Key words: **yet, since, ever**

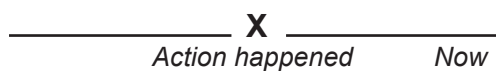
**Time line: ('link to now' meaning)**



#### **I did** (*udvidet tid*)

Key words: **in 1982, yesterday, last week, when, ago**

**Time line: ('past' meaning – no link to now)**



Functions	Examples
1. Something which began in the past and is still the case	• Andy <b>has been</b> friends with Paul since they were six ( <i>They are still friends</i> ).
2. Something which has continued up to the present moment but has now finished	• I <b>ve been</b> away for a couple of weeks ( <i>but I'm back now</i> ).
3. Something in the recent past which has direct consequences in the present	• Richard <b>has bought</b> a new motorbike ( <i>He has got a new bike now</i> ).

Functions	Examples
1. To talk about <b>completed actions</b> at a particular point in the past – with no link (time-wise) to the present	• I <b>moved</b> to Copenhagen three years ago. • I <b>didn't</b> see you yesterday. • When <b>did</b> you meet your wife?



## Exercise 4.2

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### *I did (datid) versus I have done (førnutid)*

Complete the following sentences with the correct form (*I did* or *I have done*) of the verb in brackets:

- a) Nobody (hear) \_\_\_\_\_ from Amanda since she (go) \_\_\_\_\_ to the Seychelles.
- b) The town is very different now. It (change) \_\_\_\_\_ a lot.
- c) Sharon eventually (find) \_\_\_\_\_ the job she (want) \_\_\_\_\_ last year.
- d) When she (be) \_\_\_\_\_ a child, she always (want) \_\_\_\_\_ to do the most dangerous things.
- e) I (speak) \_\_\_\_\_ to the delegates three times already.
- f) The mountain (seem) \_\_\_\_\_ very high as the weary group started to plod uphill.
- g) The Norwegians (plant) \_\_\_\_\_ their flag at the summit just before the British team (arrive) \_\_\_\_\_ .
- h) I (own) \_\_\_\_\_ this car for three years now.

# Appendix 1: Standard email phrases

FUNCTION	MORE FORMAL	MORE INFORMAL
Name	Dear Mr/Ms Hathaway Dear Jane	Hi Mary Mary, ... (or no name at all)
Previous contact	Thank you for your email of (date) With reference to your email sent (date) I apologize for not getting in contact with you before now.	Thanks for your email. Re your last email, ... Sorry I haven't written for ages, but...
Common acquaintance	Your name was given to me by...	I got your name from...
Reason for writing	We are writing to inform you that... I am writing in connection with... In reply to your email, here are...	Just a short note to let you know that... I'm writing about... Here's the ... you asked for.
Giving information	I'm writing to let you know that... We are able to confirm that... We have the pleasure of... We would like to remind you that...	Just a note to say... I can confirm that... You'll be pleased to hear that... Don't forget...
Drawing attention to something	We would like to point out that... We note from our records that you haven't...	Please note that... You haven't...
Giving bad news	We regret to inform you that... Unfortunately, ...	I'm sorry to tell you, but... I'm afraid...
Attachments	Please find attached... I'm sending you...	I've attached... Here is the ... you wanted.
Asking for information	Could you give me some information about... I would like to know... I'm interested in finding out...	Can you tell me a little more about... I'd like to know... Please send me...
Requests	I would be grateful if you could... I wonder if you could... Do you think I could have...	Please... / Can you... Could you... Can I have...
Promising action	I will... I promise to look into this. I will contact you again shortly.	I'll... I'll look into it. I'll get back to you soon.
Offering help	If you wish, I would be happy to ... Would you like me to...	If you like, I can... Do you want me to...
Final comments	Thank you for your assistance. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions. Give my regards to... I look forward to... We apologise for any inconvenience caused.	Thanks for your help. If there's anything else, just let me know. Just give me a call if you have any questions. Say hello to... Looking forward to... Again, I'm sorry about...
Closing	Regards Best regards Kind regards	Best wishes All the best Best



## Useful Links

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### **Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)**

<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

Most of the definitions in this booklet come from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. It's free, quick and easy to use and has a function where you can hear a word being pronounced (in both British and American English).

I would recommend it if you're in doubt about the exact meaning of a word.

### **Collins dictionary and thesaurus**

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>

Similar to the Oxford dictionary, but also has a very good thesaurus (synonym dictionary).

### **Oxford online collocations dictionary**

<http://www.freecollocation.com/>

This is basically a free online copy of Oxford's very comprehensive Oxford Collocations Dictionary book and CD ROM. It simply lists all the words that collocate ('go together with') the keyword. See Section 4c above for more details on collocations.

### **Howjsay**

<http://www.howjsay.com/>

Free online pronunciation dictionary of (mainly) British English, this is very good for very technical words that you wouldn't find in other dictionaries.

### **KU Lex – the University of Copenhagen's own dictionary**

<https://ordbog.ku.dk/>

This is your go-to dictionary for single terms to do with university administration, job titles and so on.

### **KU Translate – the University of Copenhagen's translation tool**

<https://kUNET.ku.dk/medarbejderguide/Sider/Kommunikation/ku-translate.aspx>

This should be a step up from Google Translate for university-related texts as it searches the university's own database before resorting to machine translation if it can't find a term. Recommended for a body of text rather than a single word (when you should use KU Lex instead).

### **University of Copenhagen English Style Guides**

[https://ordbog.ku.dk/pdf/Styleguide\\_2.pdf](https://ordbog.ku.dk/pdf/Styleguide_2.pdf)

<https://ordbog.ku.dk/pdf/sprogvejledning.pdf>

Two style guides: one in English and one in Danish. Useful to find out what the KU protocol is for particular structures, e.g. dates.

# Key to exercises



## Exercise 2.1

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### Email errors

Spot and correct the errors in the following email:

Dear Mr Ashbury

Thank you for your email of 16 May 2019 about the forthcoming 'Excellent Emails' conference. I am sending the English registration form you asked for. Please note (no comma!) that the deadline for submitting the form is the end of this month.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that you need to pay a conference fee of DKK 1,050. We would be grateful if you could pay this as soon as possible. You can pay by bank transfer or credit card.

Regarding your question about accommodation, I will get back to you on Friday with some hotels you can contact.

We look forward to receiving your completed registration form.

Regards

Rose Tompkins

## Exercise 3.1

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How would you change the highlighted parts of the following sentences?

- a) Jørgen Klopp's Liverpool team has never lost a match at this football ground.
- b) The position of Parish priest needs to be filled temporarily because of maternity leave.
- c) The course director and the study board are responsible for the teaching on the courses.
- d) Tristan Otto, the so-called king of dinosaurs, will be exhibited in Copenhagen in April, giving Danes the opportunity of getting right up close to one of the world's most complete Tyrannosaurus skeletons.
- e) You have two options: go back to jail or stay here on the island.
- f) Peter Fich is responsible for the company's finances, accounts, IT and HR.
- g) Birgitte also told us that she was studying economics at evening school.



## Exercise 3.2

Sample sentences for you to tease apart: which of the two highlighted options should you choose in each sentence?

- a) The car is **insured/ensured** against fire and theft.
- b) Please **insure/ensure** that all lights are switched off before you leave.
- c) We have already spent a huge **number/amount** of time on the project.
- d) A large **number/amount** of people have applied for the job.
- e) I'll let you know **if/in case** anyone calls about the house.
- f) You'd better take the keys **if/in case** I'm out when you come home.
- g) The papers are sent to external **examinators/examiners**.
- h) Improving **customer/costumer** satisfaction is a core company strategy.
- i) She needed a special **exemption/dispensation** to remarry.
- j) She was given **exemption/dispensation** from taking the final examination.
- k) What is the minimum entry **demand/requirement** for this course?

## Exercise 3.3

Put the verbs in the box in the most appropriate gaps in the sentences below (note: you may need to change the verb in some way to fit the sentence):

appoint	do	make
attend	hold	solve
comply	join	take on

- a) All members of staff are obliged to \_\_\_\_ attend \_\_\_\_ the departmental meeting.
- b) Nobody was willing to \_\_\_\_ take on \_\_\_\_ such a thankless task.
- c) I'm sorry, I forgot to \_\_\_\_ do \_\_\_\_ my homework this week.
- d) My cousin has decided to \_\_\_\_ join \_\_\_\_ the army.
- e) I think we need to \_\_\_\_ make \_\_\_\_ a few changes to the plan.
- f) If we don't \_\_\_\_ solve \_\_\_\_ this problem soon, we'll have to abandon the project.
- g) The election was \_\_\_\_ held \_\_\_\_ earlier this year.
- h) It is the head of department who \_\_\_\_ appoints \_\_\_\_ the assessment committee.
- i) All furniture must \_\_\_\_ comply \_\_\_\_ with fire safety regulations.





## Exercise 3.4

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Which of the two highlighted options is correct in the following sentences:

- a) Please **check/control** that you have included all documentation with your application.
- b) I'm not so keen on the job, but I've got a great set of **colleges/colleagues**.
- c) We ask everyone to read and sign the consent **forms/formulas**.
- d) I need to put the job **advertisement/announcement** on the website.
- e) This is a high-yield investment account that pays a lot of **rent/interest**, but is risky.
- f) We get a new **scheme/timetable** each semester.
- g) I'll ask my **boss/chief** if I can have the day off tomorrow.

## Exercise 4.1

---

**Simpel tid (I do) versus udvidet tid (I am doing)**

Complete the following sentences with the correct form (*I do* or *I am doing*) of the verb in brackets. Remember the 'stative' verbs mentioned above (that you can't use in the continuous form):

- a) She (study) \_\_\_\_\_ is studying \_\_\_\_\_ hard for her exams at the moment.
- b) Alex never (break) \_\_\_\_\_ breaks \_\_\_\_\_ a promise or (let down) \_\_\_\_\_ lets down \_\_\_\_\_ a friend.
- c) I'll be with you in a minute. I (just finish) \_\_\_\_\_ am just finishing \_\_\_\_\_ something in the kitchen.
- d) At weekends, she frequently (drive) \_\_\_\_\_ drives \_\_\_\_\_ up to her mother's in Liverpool, and (spend) \_\_\_\_\_ spends \_\_\_\_\_ an evening with her sister on the way back.
- e) She (jog) \_\_\_\_\_ jogs \_\_\_\_\_ around the park three times a week.
- f) He (commute) \_\_\_\_\_ is commuting \_\_\_\_\_ to Paris every day this week.
- g) I'm a bit worried about Greg. He (work) \_\_\_\_\_ is working \_\_\_\_\_ too hard in his present job. He really (need) \_\_\_\_\_ needs \_\_\_\_\_ a holiday.
- h) I (know) \_\_\_\_\_ know \_\_\_\_\_ her husband (look for) \_\_\_\_\_ is looking for \_\_\_\_\_ a new job at the moment.



## Exercise 4.2

---

### *I did (datid) versus I have done (førnutid)*

Complete the following sentences with the correct form (*I did or I have done*) of the verb in brackets:

- a) Nobody (hear) \_\_\_\_\_ has heard \_\_\_\_\_ from Amanda since she (go) \_\_\_\_\_ went \_\_\_\_\_ to the Seychelles.
- b) The town is very different now. It (change) \_\_\_\_\_ has changed \_\_\_\_\_ a lot.
- c) Sharon eventually (find) \_\_\_\_\_ found \_\_\_\_\_ the job she (want) \_\_\_\_\_ wanted \_\_\_\_\_ last year.
- d) When she (be) \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ a child, she always (want) \_\_\_\_\_ wanted \_\_\_\_\_ to do the most dangerous things.
- e) I (speak) \_\_\_\_\_ have spoken \_\_\_\_\_ to the delegates three times already.
- f) The mountain (seem) \_\_\_\_\_ seemed \_\_\_\_\_ very high as the weary group started to plod uphill.
- g) The Norwegians (plant) \_\_\_\_\_ planted \_\_\_\_\_ their flag at the summit just before the British team (arrive) \_\_\_\_\_ arrived \_\_\_\_\_ .
- h) I (own) \_\_\_\_\_ have owned \_\_\_\_\_ this car for three years now.



Do you find that carrying out your work tasks in English is more difficult and takes much longer than in Danish?

Do you feel that you stumble time after time over the same grammatical problem areas in English?

Do you often struggle to find the right word or expression in English?

Do you sometimes wonder whether the English you're using is correct or not?

Then this handbook is for you!

