Some Tips for Academic Writing and Using Microsoft Word

It is worth reconsidering how we approach one of our most common tasks: writing. Because of the demand on producing written materials frequently, this is particularly important for people early in their academic careers. Abraham Lincoln once said: “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” This article describes some techniques that are useful in academic writing, particularly for Microsoft Word but also available in other similar tools.

**ADVICE**

**USING DASH AND HYPHEN**

There are different types of dashes and hyphens that are used in professional writing:

- **Hyphen (-)** separates components of a compound word (e.g., long-standing) and in prefixes and suffixes (e.g., de-Stalinization).
- **En-dash (–)** indicates spans or differentiations, replacing “to” and “and” (e.g., years 1754–1763, US–Canada border, pp. 81–101).
- **Em-dash (—)** shows a break in a sentence or parenthetical statements (e.g., A flock of sparrows—some of them juveniles—alighted and sang.).
- **Double-hyphen (--)** provides an em-dash when you do not have a typing tool like Word (with no space around it). With a space after, it is used in electronic signatures (e.g., -- Sophie Smith).

**QUOTATIONS AND ITALICIZING**

There are no universal rules on how to use quotations, but there are certain conventions that are commonly followed in academic writing.

The purpose of a double quotation is to note material quoted directly from a source. But it can be used for other reasons. When introducing a word or phrase used as an ironic comment as slang, or as an invented or coined expression, you can use double quotation (e.g., considered “normal” behavior). In this usage, use quotation marks only the first time the word or phrase is used. To cite a letter, word, phrase, or sentence as a linguistic example, or to introduce a technical or key term, do not use double quotation. Instead, italicize the term (e.g., we call it fidelity-transfer correlation).

Mainly in American English, the use of single quotation marks is within double quotations to set off material that in the original source was enclosed in double quotation marks (e.g., In their study they found that “the ‘fidelity of simulation’ should not be of concern.”).

**OUTLINE VIEW**

Academic papers and books have headings in different levels—a heading might have several sub-headings, each having their own sub-headings, and so on. When writing such docu-
This article describes some techniques that are useful in academic writing.

Around the world, mobile carriers have begun offering 5G wireless service. But a slow rollout and limited compatible devices, means that 4G networks are still preferred.