

In accordance with vs. According to

The following revision is taken from a dissertation by a Chinese-speaking postgraduate student of Social Policy

Original	Revision
In accordance with <i>Marriage and Divorce Statistics</i> , for one hundred years before the Second World War, crude marriage rates (persons marrying per 1,000 population of all ages) in England and Wales were steady (15.2 - 17.0 per thou).	According to <i>Marriage and Divorce Statistics</i> , for one hundred years before the Second World War, crude marriage rates (persons marrying per 1,000 population of all ages) in England and Wales were steady (15.2 - 17.0 per thou).

This revision illustrates an occasional confusion among my students between the expressions **In accordance with** and **According to**.

In accordance with

This expression emphasises the rule, principle, law etc, which is followed, and which states what **should** happen. This is shown in the following citations:

1. The Commission insists that these funds must be spent **in accordance with** all the Community's most sacred environmental principles, to say nothing of its legislation.
2. Last month, the bank's management submitted a detailed plan for making changes **in accordance with** the review's findings.
3. The court may **in accordance with** law grant a dissolution of the marriage provided that the court is satisfied that adequate and proper provision will be made for any dependant spouse and for any child.
4. Existing Sidewinders follow a preset path with the help of sets of rigid fins, at the front and back, that alter position **in accordance with** instructions from an on-board computer.
5. The UN's peace plan rests on Mr Rabbani's willingness to relinquish office next month **in accordance with** one of the many peace pacts he has concluded
6. If such a question arises for the first time in a lawsuit, the judge will have to decide the meaning **in accordance with** the recognized rules of interpretation, and his decision will be a binding authority for all future cases in which the same question arises.

Immediately we can see why **in accordance with** is inappropriate in the student's sentence: statistics certainly do not state who **should** get married!

According to

This expression emphasises the **basis** for doing something, or for believing something:

7. Air pollution is growing worse in Britain, **according to** the latest set of detailed statistics compiled by the Department of the Environment.
8. Our Galaxy contains at least 100 million black holes, **according to** calculations by a Dutch astrophysicist.
9. Most organochlorine pollution in the Baltic is declining, **according to** a joint study by scientists at Ehime University in Japan and the University of Gdansk in Poland.
10. **According to** Alkenbrecher, Binning's theory is that true creativity is a result of disordered thoughts.
11. Each of the 10,000 most common words in English is ranked **according to** its frequency in everyday use.
12. Japanese oil tankers constructed **according to** a modern design with high-tensile steel have been recalled for emergency repairs to cracks.

Notice that there is some overlap between the two expressions: so 11 and 12 could equally as well have been written:

11. Each of the 10,000 most common words in English is ranked **in accordance with** its frequency in everyday use.
12. Japanese oil tankers constructed **in accordance with** a modern design with high-tensile steel have been recalled for emergency repairs to cracks.

Exercise

In 4 of the following citations the expression used was **in accordance with** and in 4 it was **according to**. Can you guess which expression was used in which citation?

1. Combining flywheels with batteries could help to give electric cars that vital kick-start to widespread use, _____ researchers in the US.
2. This hearing was neither fair nor was it conducted _____ the teacher's contract.
3. _____ Hawaii's department of agriculture, the mail has been responsible for bringing in such pests as snakes, poisonous spiders, live insects, snails, diseased plants and animals, and a host of species prohibited under Hawaii's agricultural regulations.
4. The World Bank does try, _____ its operational directives, to ensure that resettlement is avoided where possible and minimised where it cannot be avoided.
5. Stan Mortenson, says that under the terms of the Nixon will and _____ the instructions of his heirs "the lawsuits will continue".
6. It seems that neither before nor after their sessions with Freud did his patients recall the alleged early sexual experiences, which _____ him had occurred before they were four years old.
7. _____ Greenpeace, between November and February 600 tonnes of pesticides were shipped to Albania by Schmidt-Cretan, a joint venture between a waste contractor in Hanover and an Albanian toy company.
8. Vandebeek favours a move straight to an international standard and, _____ resolutions passed in Montreal, has initiated an approach to the ISO.

Click [here](#) to see the answers.

31st July 1998

Back to Kibbitzers

Consultant: Tim Johns