

CHALLENGES IN MEDICAL ACADEMIC WRITING: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND OTHER WRITINGS

PART 2



AIMS OF THE WORKSHOP

Part 2

What is academic writing (AW)?

Features of academic writing

Part 3

Types of academic writing

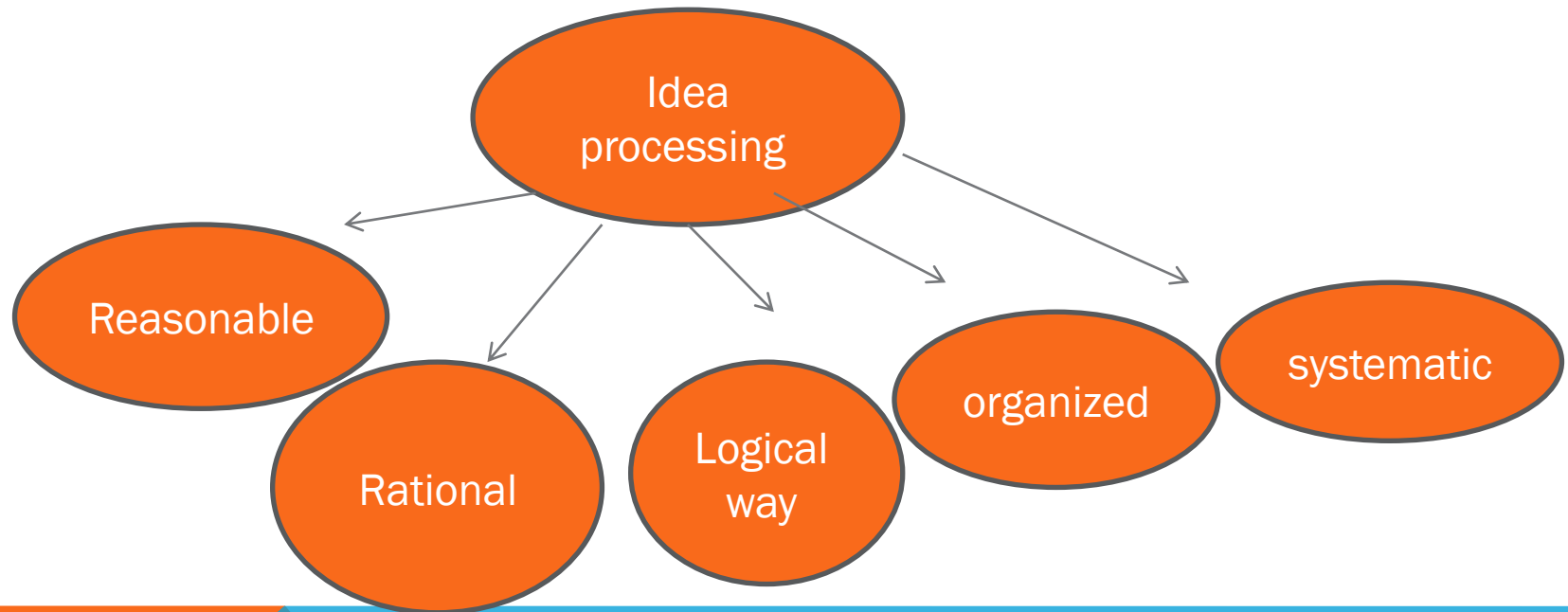
Difference between academic writing and other writings

WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing is a **process** of **presenting an idea** in a **rational, organized, systematic, reasonable, and logical way.**

WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing



TIPS FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC WRITING

- Choosing the Right Word
 - Nouns, Articles, Verbs
- Avoiding Wordiness
 - Word Order and Sentence Structure
 - Coherence at the Sentence and Paragraph Level
- Developing an Appropriate Style
 - Organization and Approach
 - Documentation/Use of Research

Articles

There are 2 types of articles: *definite* and *indefinite*.

➤ Definite Articles (the)

- The noun the article supports is specific, not new to reader
- Used when intending a singular noun to refer to an entire class of items

(See: “Examples” for common uses of definite articles!)

➤ Indefinite Articles (a, an)

- The noun the article supports is not unique, other examples exist
- Used when noun is new to reader or is an arbitrary example of the class the noun belongs to

(See: “Examples” for common uses of indefinite articles!)

EXAMPLES

• Definite Articles

Example 1: Using the direct article “the” in reference to specific entities.

The Academic Writing Centre in *the* James Hardiman Library provides support for students of *the* National University of Ireland, Galway.

Example 2: Using the direct article “the” when intending a singular noun to refer to an entire class of items.

The students of NUI Galway can refer to *the* resources provided online to enhance their academic writing.

• Indefinite Articles

**Tip! Choosing between a or an: When the noun begins with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u), then you use “an”. When the noun begins with a consonant (all other letters), then you use “a”.*

Example 1: Using the direct article “a” for a noun beginning with a consonant.

The Academic Writing Centre can be *a* great resource for *a* student seeking assistance in writing.

Example 2: Using the direct article “an” for a noun beginning with a vowel.

Revision is *an* important element in making sure *an* essay is of good quality.

Notice how the articles precede the nouns in the sentences!

Nouns

A noun is a *person*, *place* or *thing* and is normally preceded by an article (a, an, the).

➤ Countable vs. Uncountable

- **Countable:** Nouns that are countable mean that they can exist as more than one and the endings -s or -es are added to the end to represent plurality
- **Uncountable:** Nouns that refer to substances, concepts, or general terms for classes of items

(See: "Examples" for common uses of each!)

➤ Pronouns

- Pronouns take the place of specific nouns
- Types of pronouns:
 - I, me, he, she, herself, you, it, that, they, each, few, many, who, whoever, whose, someone, everybody...

(See: "Examples" for common uses of pronouns!)

➤ Proper nouns

- Are capitalised and have special rules with article usage

(See: "Examples" for these special uses!)

EXAMPLES

BOLD underlines represent singular countable nouns. **SLIM** underlines represent plural countable nouns. Articles in *italics*!

• Countable nouns

Example: Using an article before a singular countable noun and not using one before a plural countable noun. (Also, adding -s or -es to plural nouns!)

*The **Academic Writing Centre** helps **students** of *the National University of Ireland* Galway with **difficulties** in writing.*

• Uncountable nouns

Example: The correct and incorrect usage of uncountable nouns.

Incorrect: Good academic writing is important for students to develop throughout their years in ***the*** education.

Correct: Good academic writing is important for students to develop throughout their years in education.

• Pronouns

Example: The presence of pronouns in a sentence replacing the noun.

Ciara was not confident with her writing, so ***she*** went to the Academic Writing Centre for help. James told Ciara ***he*** saw mistakes in her paper, but very ***few***.

• Proper nouns

Example: Some proper nouns require an article, some don't. Here's an example!

*The **Academic Writing Centre** at *the James Hardiman Library* is located in **Ireland**.*

BOLD underlines represent proper nouns requiring an article. **SLIM** underlines represent proper nouns that do not require an article. Articles in *italics*!



Verbs

Verbs describe actions: what has happened, what is happening, or what will or might happen; or a condition.

➤ Subject-verb agreement

- Verb must agree with subject in: number & person
- Be careful of modifiers!

➤ Tense

- A verb places the event of the sentence in the past, present or future (whether the action happened, is happening, or will happen)

➤ Voice

- Two voices in English: active or passive (subject: doer or receiver of action expressed by verb)

EXAMPLES

- Subject-verb agreement

NOT ACCEPTABLE

The college have the Academic Writing Centre to helps students with writing.

ACCEPTABLE

The college has the Academic Writing Centre to help students with writing.

- Tense

Past

The Academic Writing Centre helped many students with academic writing last semester.

Present

The Academic Writing Centre helps many students with academic writing each semester.

Future

The Academic Writing Centre will help students with academic writing for many semesters to come.

- Voice

Active

The Academic Writing Centre provides services in academic writing to the students of NUI Galway.

Passive

Services in academic writing are provided by the Academic Writing Centre to the students of NUI Galway.

General Tips on Wordiness

- **KISS – Keep It Simple, Sweetheart**
 - Say what needs to be said in as few words as possible
 - **BUT** don't sacrifice any vital information!
- **Conciseness**
 - REMEMBER – Sometimes, less is more
 - Don't try to say too much in one sentence
 - Breaking up a really long sentence into 2 smaller ones can make it easier on the reader to understand your idea
- **Avoid repetition**
 - Repeating ideas can make the writing confusing
 - Once you have made your point, back it up with research and move on to the next



Sentence Structure Commas

Commas should be used in the following situations:

- **Introductory Elements**
 - A comma separates introduction of sentence to main point
- **Coordinating conjunctions joining independent clauses**
 - A comma is placed before the coordinating conjunction which separates 2 clauses when necessary
- **Elements in a series**
 - A comma distinguishes between all of the individual items in the series
- **Coordinate modifiers**
 - Separate two or more modifiers of a word with a comma to indicate their distinctiveness from one another
- **Non-restrictive modifiers**
 - Usually introduced by “which”
 - Contain information that is not essential to establishing the meaning of what it modifies

EXAMPLES

Introductory Elements

Each day of the week, the Academic Writing Centre helps students with issues in academic writing.

Coordinating Conjunctions

As with anything else, academic writing requires practice, and can be mastered by anyone who practices their craft.

Elements in a Series

Stages of writing include: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, editing, and polishing.

Coordinating Conjunctions

As with anything else, academic writing requires practice, and can be mastered by anyone who practices their craft.

The conjunction “and” needs to be preceded by a comma.

Non-Restrictive Modifiers

The Academic Writing Centre, which is located in the James Hardiman Library, is an open service to students of NUI Galway.

Sentence Structure: Colons vs. Semi-Colons



Colons

- Use colons for the following purposes:
 - to introduce and emphasize lists and certain appositional elements
 - to set off and emphasize explanations and appositional elements
 - to separate titles from subtitles

Examples

Example 1: Stages of writing include: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, editing, and polishing.

Example 2: When planning your writing, you must first ask yourself: What question am I trying to answer?

Example 3: I am currently reading a book entitled Composition in Four Keys: Inquiring into the Field by Wiley, Gleason and Phelps to improve my academic writing.

Semicolons

- Use semicolons for the following purposes:
 - to join two independent clauses
 - to separate sentence elements with commas in them

Examples

Example 1: There are two ways to set up appointments at the Academic Writing Centre; one is by coming in for a one-on-one consultation in person, and the other is scheduling a one-on-one consultation over the phone with a tutor.

Example 2: Italicize titles of journals, books, newsletters, and manuals; letters, words, terms, and equation symbols; foreign words; and names of specific things.

Common Transitions



- cause and effect: consequently, therefore, accordingly, as a result, because, for this reason, hence, thus
- sequence: furthermore, in addition, moreover, first, second, third, finally, again, also, and, besides, further, in the first place, last, likewise, next, then, too
- comparison or contrast: similarly, also, in the same way, likewise, although, at the same time, but, conversely, even so, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, otherwise, still, yet
- example: for example, for instance, in fact, indeed, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate
- purpose: for this purpose, for this reason, to this end, with this object
- time or location: nearby, above, adjacent to, below, beyond, farther on, here, opposite to, there, to the south, before, after, later, afterward, immediately, in the meantime, meanwhile, now, since, soon, then, while

FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

There are eight main features of academic writing .

- 1. Formal**
- 2. Objective**
- 3. Structured**
- 4. Concise**
- 5. Evidence-based**
- 6. Hedged**

FORMALITY

You can make your writing more formal through the vocabulary that you use.

For academic writing:

- choose formal instead of informal vocabulary. For example, 'somewhat' is more formal than 'a bit', 'insufficient' is more formal than 'not enough'.

Insufficient intake of vitamin D is one of many ways in which rickets may develop.

There are lots of reasons.

There are significant number of reasons

Conditions changed a lot

There are considerable variations in the conditions

Also, a lot of the findings are a little unreliable.

Moreover, many of the findings are somewhat unreliable.

FORMALITY

- **Avoid contractions. For example, use ‘did not’ rather than ‘didn’t’.**

However, the increase in the viral RNA copy number in these organs did not result in an increased viral titer.

A bit	The interviews were a bit difficult to schedule	The interviews were (difficult/somewhat difficult) to schedule
A lot of, a couple of	A lot of studies	(Many/several/a great number of/eight) studies
Isn't, can't, doesn't, would've (or any other contraction)	The sample isn't	The sample is not
Kind of, sort of	The findings were kind of significant	The findings were (somewhat significant/significant to some degree)
Til, till	From 2008 till 2012	From 2008 (until/to) 2012
You, your	You can clearly see the results	One can clearly see the results

OBJECTIVITY

Academic written language is in general **objective** rather than personal. It therefore has **fewer words** that refer to the writer or the reader. This means that the main **emphasis** should be on the **information** that you want to give and the arguments you want to make, rather than you. For that reason, academic writing tends to use **nouns (and adjectives)**, rather than verbs (and adverbs). Nobody really wants to know what you "think" or "believe". They want to know what you have studied and learned and how this has led you to your various **conclusions**.

OBJECTIVITY

-You may still have **to present your opinion**. For example, you may need to:

interpret findings

evaluate a theory

develop an argument

critique the work of others.

-Move information around in the sentence to emphasize things and ideas, instead of people and feelings. For example, instead of writing

I believe the model is valid, based on these findings.

write **‘These findings indicate that the model is valid’.**

OBJECTIVITY

Personal or impersonal style?

An impersonal style uses:

the **passive** voice

the **third person** rather than the first person (it rather than I or we)

things rather than people as subjects of sentences.

Examples of active and passive sentences

Active: I observed the patient to be...

Passive: The patient was observed to be...

Active: The authors suggest...

Passive: It is suggested...

Active: We used a standard graphical representation
to...

**Passive: A standard graphical representation was
used to...**

OBJECTIVITY

Examples of the first and third person pronouns

First person: I found... **Third person: It was found that...**

First person: I assumed that... **Third person: It was assumed that...**

Examples of persons or things as subjects

Person as subject: I noticed...

Thing as subject: Analysis of the raw data indicated...

Person as subject: In this report I show...

Thing as subject: This report presents...

STRUCTURED

Clear structure

An academic text is not just a **collection of ideas** about a topic—it needs to have a clear **purpose**. Start with **a relevant research question** or thesis statement, and use it to develop a focused argument. **Only include information** that is relevant to your overall purpose.

Pay attention to structure **at three levels**: the structure of the **whole text**, **paragraph** structure, and **sentence** structure.

It covers various academic genres (lab report, essay,, research paper, ...)

Cohesion

Coherence

STRUCTURED

Cohesion and Coherence

cohesion relates to the micro level of the text the words and sentences and how they kinked and joined together

Coherence refers to the macro level of a texts which help it to make sense as a whole

Achieving cohesion by following 4 methods:

Reference word

Transition signals

Substitution

Ellipsis

WHAT ARE REFERENCE WORDS

Words which do not make sense on their own

Because they refer to something else in the text e.g this, that, those, it, they, them, he, she, which

Example:

Cohesion is an important features of academic writing. Cohesion can help ensure that your writing coheres or sticks together. Cohesion will make it easier for the reader to follow the main idea in your essay.

WHAT ARE TRANSITION SIGNALS

Words or phrases which signal relationships between ideas

Cause : For this reason, because of

Effect : as a result, consequently

Comparison : similarly, just like

Contrast : however, whereas

WHAT IS SUBSTITUTION

Substitute an earlier word with another word

Example:

The graph on the left shows average calorie intake by age, while the one on the right shows daily exercise level.

WHAT IS ELLIPSIS

Leave out words because the meaning is clear

Example:

The first graph show a high calorie intake for 20-25 year-olds, the first graph shows a low calorie intake for 25-30year-olds.

COHERENCE

Writing coherent sentences

Vocabulary

Grammar

Word order

Spelling

COHERENCE

Writing coherent paragraphs

Topic sentences

present the main idea of each paragraph

Using relevant supportive sentences

must relate to the main idea

Logical order of sentences

All of these things will help the reader understand you

-Start a **new paragraph** when you move onto a new idea.

Use a **topic sentence at the start of each paragraph** to indicate what it's about, and make clear **transitions** between paragraphs.

Make sure every paragraph is relevant to your argument or question.

CONCISE

Edit out unnecessary words and phrases

Go straight to the point e.g. what do you want to say

Make your point clearly

Example: our website has made available many of the things you can use for making a decision on the best dentist. (20 words)

Revision: our website present criteria for determining the best dentist. (9 words)

EVIDENCE-BASED

Evidenced (opinions and arguments should be supported by evidenced in other words)

Facts

Reasons

Examples

Statistics

Citations

EVIDENCED

A report

Introduction

Dengue is a major global problem in many parts of the world causing epidemics throughout the world (Bhatte et al., 2013). In Thailand specifically, frequent outbreaks in all administrative provinces of Thailand due to favorable vector breeding conditions and hyper-endemic nature of the virus, causes significance impact on public health resources (Xu et al., 2019). In Bangkok alone, a recent 2017 outbreak resulted in over 4000 case counts being reported in a single month (Ministry of public health, 2020).

HEDGING

Hedging language in academic writing is used to express caution and avoid strong, unqualified statements that may be easily disproven.

To avoid generalizations, you can:

- Use a quantifier (e.g. few, many, some)
- Use adverbs or adverbial phrases (e.g. occasionally, often, usually)
- Use modal verbs (e.g. can, may, might, would, could)
- Examples: Perhaps, maybe, admittedly, might, possibly, likely, probably, predominantly, presumably, so to speak, seems, appears, may, think, to some extent, suggests, sometimes, often, around, roughly, fairly, usually, etc.

HEDGE

1. **Introductory verbs:** e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
2. **Certain lexical verbs:** e.g. believe, assume, suggest
3. **Certain modal verbs:** e.g. will, must, would, may, might, could
4. **Adverbs of frequency:** e.g. often, sometimes, usually
4. **Modal adverbs:** e.g. certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably,
5. **Modal adjectives:** e.g. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
6. **Modal nouns:** e.g. assumption, possibility, probability
7. **That clauses:** e.g. It could be the case that , It might be suggested that, There is every hope that .
8. **To-clause + adjective:** e.g. It may be possible to obtain, It is important to develop .
It is useful to study .

BOOSTER

If hedges express doubt, boosters demonstrate confidence.

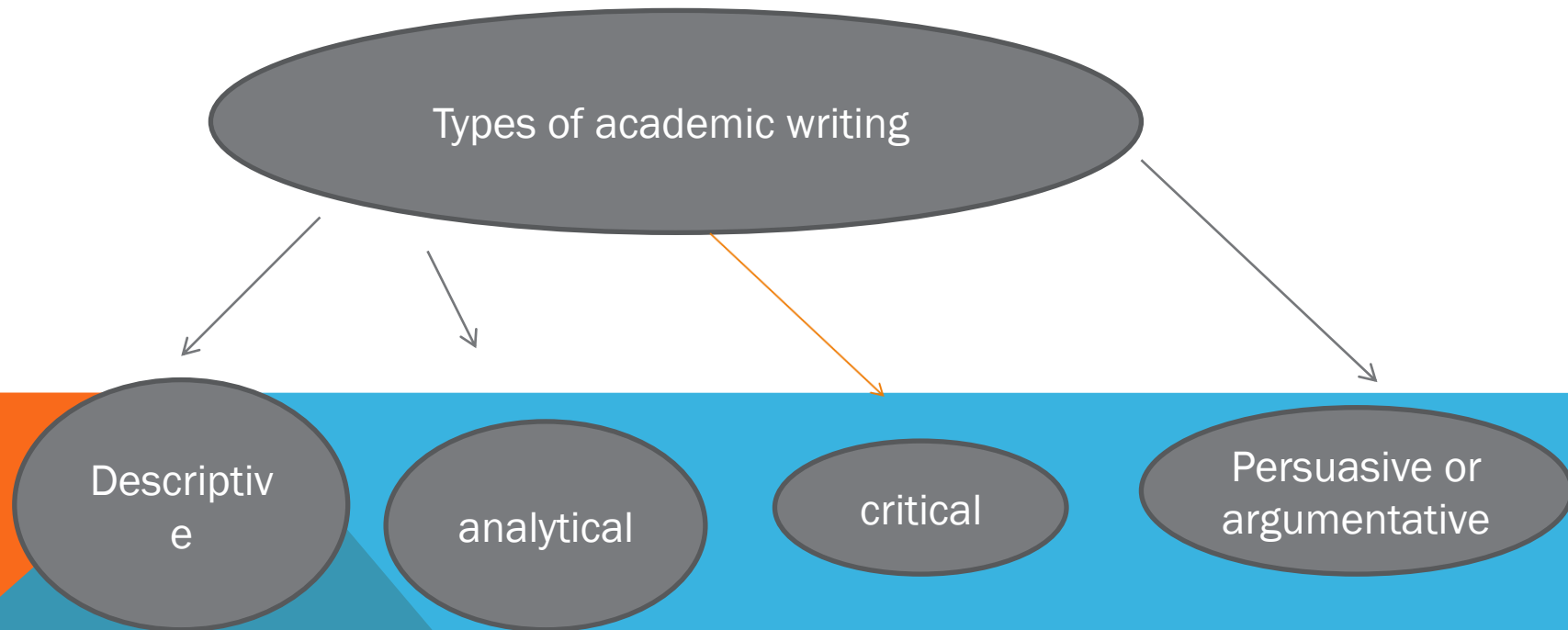
Examples: certainly, indeed, always, undoubtedly, in fact, clearly, actually, obviously, know, prove, conclusively, definitely, evidently.

Part 2



TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Your audience and writing purpose will determine your writing style.



Descriptive: Descriptive writing is one of the simplest and most used academic writing types. The main purpose of descriptive writing is to state facts and inform the audience. So, when you hear these terms in any academic piece – report, summarize, identify, record, define – know that it is descriptive academic writing. An example would be a summary of an article or a report of the results of an experiment.

Analytical: Analytical writing includes descriptive writing, but also requires you to re-organise the facts and information you describe into categories, groups, parts, types or relationships in a way that allows your readers to understand the content better

Analytical writing is the next type of academic writing commonly used in the academic field. When you are working on an academic study, you usually do not only use descriptive writing. You must mix and match different types of writing to convey your message to your target group. Therefore, aside from simply informing, you need to also organize your information. Instead of simply stating your facts and data, you also explain what they are and how they are related to each other. Phrases such as “examine,” “compare,” “relate,” “contrast,” and “analyze” are the most common words used in analytical writing.

Argumentative or Persuasive: Persuasive writing has all the features of analytical writing (that is, information plus re-organising the information), with the addition of your own point of view. Most essays are persuasive, and there is a persuasive element in at least the discussion and conclusion of a research article.

Points of view in academic writing can include an argument, recommendation, interpretation of findings or evaluation of the work of others. In persuasive writing, each claim you make needs to be supported by some evidence, for example a reference to research findings or published sources. Whichever it may be, make sure to support your arguments with evidence. Words such as “evaluate,” “argue,” and “discuss,” signify a persuasive form of academic writing.



Critical: Critical writing is common for research, postgraduate and advanced undergraduate writing. It has all the features of persuasive writing, with the added feature of at least one other point of view. While persuasive writing requires you to have your own point of view on an issue or topic, critical writing requires you to consider at least two points of view, including your own.

For example, you may explain a researcher's interpretation or argument and then evaluate the merits of the argument, or give your own alternative interpretation.

Examples of critical writing assignments include a critique of a journal article, or a literature review that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of existing research. The kinds of instructions for critical writing include: 'critique', 'debate', 'disagree' and 'evaluate'.



In many academic texts you will need to use more than one type. For example, in an original article:

you will use critical writing in the literature review to show where there is a gap or opportunity in the existing research

the methods section will be mostly descriptive to summarise the methods used to collect and analyse information

the results section will be mostly descriptive and analytical as you report on the data you collected

the discussion section is more analytical, as you relate your findings back to your research questions, and also persuasive, as you propose your interpretations of the findings.



PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Advance knowledge in a particular field

Replication

Rational inquiry

Ways to verify scholars' claims

Scientific method (techniques for investigating phenomena)

Develop, test theories on how the world works

Source:





Academic writing is about justifying, exploring and analysing concepts.

Statements must be supported with evidence, there must be a clear and logical argument. Academic writing is more impersonal so try to avoid the personal pronoun, I. Try to avoid using phrases like I believe or I think. People are not interested in what you believe or think (well they are but not in that sense!) but rather in what you can prove and demonstrate. Providing evidence and citations for your assertions and ideas is almost as important as the ideas themselves. Try to avoid phrasal verbs, it is not a story. Never ever use slang terms.



FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Complexity

Formality

Precision

Accuracy

Objectivity

Responsibility

Explicitness



Never use a long word where a short one will suffice.

If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

Clarity

Objective

impersonal, usually formal

Unity

Focus on one topic only

Coherence

Achieved by consistent use of terms



Passive vs. Active Voice

Passive voice, when overused, is weak. The actor of the verb is hidden, so is responsibility. Usually requires a “to be” construction. Find yourself asking “by whom or what”? But it can be useful, if your topic doesn’t require a specific acting agent. Poland was invaded in 1939, thus initiating the Second World War. Insulin was first discovered in 1921 at the University of Toronto and is still the only treatment available for diabetes.



Write clearly & precisely – e.g. Use effective Verb instead of Noun Phrase (as far as possible)
4 Write concisely – e.g. Use a prepositional phrase to express the less important idea

Correct Verb Tense Generally accepted theories >> present tense

Specific research papers >> e.g. “describe, present” or “deal with, investigate” >> past tense
Author+ Reference number or date+ verb of report (past tense)+ that +Findings (Present tense)
Curie [1] showed that aluminum in seawater is regulated by a thermodynamic balance.

The cases using Active Voice

A process description employs verbs that indicate a change of state, such as expand, rise, cool, and form.

e.g. Most metals expand and contract with variations in temperature.

Intransitive verbs:

stem from, originate (in), become

Research terms, such as “The study”, “The project”, “The report”, “The paper” >> use the active voice.

e.g. The paper aims to investigate the effect of X on Y.



Use “Formal + Precise” verbs

3a. Effective Verbs Use “Formal + Precise” verbs Phrasal verbs often have one-word synonyms, which are usually of Latin origin and are more formal than their phrasal verb equivalent. e.g. figure out → determine go up to → reach keep up → maintain

Effective Verbs Avoid “Verb + Noun” Collocation

>> use direct verbs

>> Workshop Ex: Task 3

e.g. Make an analysis → analyze

Make a consideration → consider

Perform a simulation → Simulate

Have a discussion about → discuss

Present a claim on → claim



Skills to write clearly

Avoid using unclear pronouns: it, this, that, these, they.>>use “ This/ these + noun” to join ideas together.e.g. According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults, down from 38% thirty years ago, now smoke. This drop can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking and fatal disease such as cancer.

skills for writing concisely

Reduce the relative clause into a prepositional phrase: 1. S+Be/V +(N1)+ which has +N2. → S+Be/V+(N1)+ with +N2. Use a prepositional phrase to express the less important idea:

e.g. A further experiment was conducted which had more accurate results. >> A further experiment was conducted with more accurate results. e.g. Labor cost is rising and manufacturers have to relocate their factories to places where there is cheaper labor. >> Due to rising labor cost, manufacturers have to... labor.

Skills for writing concisely

Reduce the clause into participle phrase:e.g. A current is sent through the material; therefore, the electrons are polarized.→ A current is sent through the material, (thus) polarizing the electrons.Prices rise; thus, the chance of hyperinflation increases.→Prices rise, thus increasing the chance of hyperinflation.>> Workshop Ex: Task 4

Dangling Modifiers should be avoided

Have the same subject in two clauses:e.g. 1. To calculate the temperature, the energy balance equation should be used.--> To calculate the temperature, we should use the energy balance equation.2. Based on the energy balance, we can calculate the temperature.Based on the energy balance, the temperature can be calculated.On the basis of the energy balance, we can calculate the temperature.

Characteristics of a good essay

Focuses on the question/ task
Has a clear structure - easy to follow
Is well researched - evidence based
Adheres to academic conventions
Is correctly referenced
Is well presented – word limit, page numbering, margins, line spacing, font type, spelling ...



Types of writing and what makes academic writing different from other forms of writings like journalistic writing and blog writing.



The importance of usage of formal language in the research



The importance of method, theory and concepts



What does it mean by originality of the research



Why raising question in proper ways becomes so important in research.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACADEMIC WRITING AND OTHER TYPES OF WRITING?

Considering the reader and purpose of academic writing (difference between writing a thank you letter to a friend or an email)

The overall purpose of academic writing is to share and discuss **academic knowledge**

The readers includes **academics and scholars**

So the first step in understanding academic writing is understanding **Academic knowledge**



WHAT IS ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

Other systems of knowledge	Academic knowledge
i.e. Common sense, Faith-based knowledge, Mythology, superstition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Knowledge that scholars, experts or scientists gather or create to:
Based on general knowledge or information	Understand the world
- It helps people make sense of everyday lives	Explain how things work Knowledge belongs to the researchers
It doesn't always require proof or explanations	Suggest how they can be improved Evidence is required when a claim is made
Belongs to everybody	Information is specific and detailed

WHAT IS ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

