

# Academic Writing at university

## What is Academic Writing?

Academic writing is a form of communication that is prevalent in educational settings, particularly at the university level. It goes beyond mere expression of ideas and opinions; instead, it involves a systematic and disciplined approach to presenting arguments, theories, and information. The primary purpose of academic writing is to convey complex ideas in a clear, organized, and evidence-based manner, catering to a scholarly audience. Whether it's essays, research papers, theses, or journal articles, academic writing serves as a cornerstone in higher education, shaping intellectual discourse and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in various fields.

Characteristics of Academic Writing:

### 1. Formality:

- Academic writing maintains a formal tone, avoiding casual language, colloquialisms, and contractions. It adheres to a professional style, reflecting the seriousness of scholarly inquiry.

### 2. Clarity and Precision:

- Precision in language is paramount in academic writing. Writers strive to convey their ideas clearly and concisely, avoiding ambiguity. Each sentence is crafted with care to ensure the reader easily grasps the intended meaning.

### 3. Objectivity:

- Academic writing maintains an objective stance. While writers present their arguments and perspectives, they do so without allowing personal biases or emotions to dominate the discourse. Evidence and logical reasoning take precedence.

### 4. Evidence-Based:

- Arguments in academic writing are supported by evidence, often derived from rigorous research. Whether through citations, data, or examples, every claim is substantiated, providing a foundation for credibility and trustworthiness.

## 5. Critical Thinking:

- Academic writing encourages critical thinking. Writers are expected to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. This involves questioning assumptions, considering alternative perspectives, and constructing well-reasoned arguments.

## 6. Structured Organization:

- Academic writing follows a structured format with clear organization. Typically, it includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each section serves a specific purpose, contributing to the overall coherence of the piece.

## 7. Academic Vocabulary:

- Specific terminology and vocabulary relevant to the field of study are commonly employed in academic writing. This helps to convey ideas precisely and ensures a shared understanding among scholars within a particular discipline.

## 8. Citations and Referencing:

- Proper citation of sources is a fundamental aspect of academic writing. Writers must adhere to a specific citation style (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago) to give credit to the original authors and avoid plagiarism.

## 9. Purposeful Introductions and Conclusions:

- Academic writing often begins with a clear thesis statement in the introduction, guiding the reader on what to expect. Conclusions summarize key points and may suggest avenues for future research or implications of the presented arguments.

- Academic writing spans various genres, including essays, research papers, reviews, and more. Each genre has its own conventions, and adept academic writers are proficient in adapting their style to suit different requirements.

## How could you develop your academic writing ?

Here are some technical steps that students can follow to learn and excel in academic writing:

### 1. Understand the Assignment Requirements:

- Carefully read and understand the assignment prompt or guidelines.
- Identify the key elements such as the type of essay, word count, formatting requirements, and any specific instructions.

### 2. Research and Gather Information:

- Conduct thorough research on the topic using reliable sources.
- Take detailed notes and organize information to support your arguments.

### 3. Create an Outline:

- Develop a clear and structured outline before starting to write.
- Organize your ideas logically, ensuring a smooth flow from introduction to conclusion.

### 4. Introduction:

- Write a compelling introduction that grabs the reader's attention and provides background information on the topic.
- Include the thesis statement in the introduction.

### 5. Body Paragraphs:

- Each paragraph should focus on a specific point or argument.
- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence and provide evidence to support your claims.
- Ensure a smooth transition between paragraphs.

### 6. Use Academic Language:

- Use formal and academic language appropriate for your field of study.
- Avoid informal language, contractions, and slang.

### 7. Cite Sources Properly:

- Follow the citation style specified by your instructor (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago).
- Cite all sources used in your research to avoid plagiarism.

## 8. Read Academic Writing Samples:

- Read well-written academic papers in your field to understand the style, structure, and language used.
- Analyze how successful writers present their arguments and support them with evidence.

## 9. Practice Regularly:

- Write regularly to practice and reinforce your skills.
- Experiment with different styles and formats to expand your writing capabilities.

Table: expressions to avoid in your Academic Writing:

| Category   | Expression to Avoid | Suggested Replacement                            |
|------------|---------------------|--|
| Verbs      | <b>Avoid:</b> Say   | <b>Use:</b> Argue, claim, assert, contend        |
| Verbs      | <b>Avoid:</b> Get   | <b>Use:</b> Acquire, obtain, receive             |
| Verbs      | <b>Avoid:</b> Do    | <b>Use:</b> Execute, perform, carry out          |
| Verbs      | <b>Avoid:</b> Make  | <b>Use:</b> Generate, create, produce            |
| Verbs      | <b>Avoid:</b> Go    | <b>Use:</b> Proceed, advance, travel             |
| Nouns      | <b>Avoid:</b> Thing | <b>Use:</b> Object, entity, element              |
| Nouns      | <b>Avoid:</b> Stuff | <b>Use:</b> Material, content, substance         |
| Nouns      | <b>Avoid:</b> Get   | <b>Use:</b> Acquisition, obtainment, reception   |
| Nouns      | <b>Avoid:</b> Do    | <b>Use:</b> Action, execution, performance       |
| Nouns      | <b>Avoid:</b> Make  | <b>Use:</b> Creation, generation, production     |
| Adjectives | <b>Avoid:</b> Good  | <b>Use:</b> Excellent, beneficial, proficient    |
| Adjectives | <b>Avoid:</b> Bad   | <b>Use:</b> Inadequate, detrimental, unfavorable |

|            |                                    |  |
|------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Adjectives | <b>Avoid:</b> Big                  | <b>Use:</b> Substantial, significant, extensive                    |
| Adjectives | <b>Avoid:</b> Small                | <b>Use:</b> Minimal, negligible, limited                           |
| Adjectives | <b>Avoid:</b> Interesting          | <b>Use:</b> Engaging, captivating, compelling                      |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> This shows that      | <b>Use:</b> This illustrates, demonstrates, indicates              |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In my opinion        | <b>Use:</b> From my perspective, I believe                         |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> Basically            | <b>Use:</b> Essentially, fundamentally, in essence                 |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> Due to the fact that | <b>Use:</b> Because, since, owing to                               |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In order to          | <b>Use:</b> To, for the purpose of, with the aim of                |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> It is said that      | <b>Use:</b> According to, as per, it has been argued that          |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> There is/are         | <b>Use:</b> The existence of, there exists, there are              |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> It seems that        | <b>Use:</b> It appears that, it is evident that, it is likely that |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> I feel that          | <b>Use:</b> I believe, I contend, I argue                          |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> I think that         | <b>Use:</b> I assert, I posit, I propose                           |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In conclusion        | <b>Use:</b> To conclude, in summary, ultimately                    |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In summary           | <b>Use:</b> To summarize, briefly, in a nutshell                   |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In the end           | <b>Use:</b> Ultimately, finally, eventually                        |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> In today's society   | <b>Use:</b> In contemporary society, in the present era            |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> As you can see       | <b>Use:</b> As is evident, as is apparent, as can be observed      |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> All in all           | <b>Use:</b> Overall, on the whole, in general                      |
| Sentences  | <b>Avoid:</b> As a matter of fact  | <b>Use:</b> Indeed, in fact, as a matter of reality                |

Avoiding contracted and informal expressions helps maintain a formal and professional tone in academic writing, contributing to a more polished and authoritative presentation of ideas.

Here are two tables: the first one with contracted expressions to avoid in academic writing and suggested replacements, and the second one with informal expressions to avoid and their formal alternatives.

Table 1: contracted expressions to avoid in academic writing

| <b>Contracted Expression</b> | <b>Suggested Replacement</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| can't                        | cannot                       |
| don't                        | do not                       |
| won't                        | will not                     |
| isn't                        | is not                       |
| haven't                      | have not                     |
| it's                         | it is                        |
| I'm                          | I am                         |
| they're                      | they are                     |
| isn't                        | is not                       |
| doesn't                      | does not                     |
| didn't                       | did not                      |
| hasn't                       | has not                      |
| I've                         | I have                       |
| we've                        | we have                      |
| you're                       | you are                      |
| that's                       | that is                      |
| we're                        | we are                       |
| you've                       | you have                     |
| shouldn't                    | should not                   |
| wouldn't                     | would not                    |

Table 2: Informal expressions to avoid

| <b>Informal Expression</b> | <b>Suggested Replacement</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| gonna                      | going to                     |
| gotta                      | got to                       |
| wanna                      | want to                      |
| kinda                      | kind of                      |
| gotta                      | got to                       |
| gotta                      | got to                       |
| sorta                      | sort of                      |
| y'all                      | you all                      |

|       |          |
|-------|----------|
| gonna | going to |
| gotta | got to   |
| wanna | want to  |
| gotta | got to   |
| kinda | kind of  |
| gonna | going to |
| wanna | want to  |
| gotta | got to   |
| gotta | got to   |
| sorta | sort of  |
| y'all | you all  |