

Academic Writing & Language



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- Academic writing is a formal approach to assignments:
 - Formal structure following academic conventions
 - Formal tone and use of language
- Writing in an academic style is something that can be learnt through guidance and conscientious practice.....
- Practice Makes Perfect 😊

The Importance of Academic Style

Success on your course is determined by your understanding of course content and your discipline

Your understanding is shaped by how you engage with course content

Your engagement with course content is assessed by **what and how you communicate in your assignments**

Academic writing style is the **'HOW'**

NB: Last week we talked about reading and notetaking, **HOW** effectively you present that data / info - whether in your written or verbal presentation work - is directly linked to Academic Style (use of professional/academic constructs)

Characteristics of Academic Style

‘Think about it – talk about it – write about it’

- **A**ccuracy

All the information you provide must accurately reflect the content of your source materials

- **B**revity

Keep it brief. Including a wide range of material, within your word count, means there's no room to go off-topic

- **C**larity

Make sure the content of your essay is easy for your reader to follow and understand.

Successful Academic Writers...

Read

Take notice of writing styles and conventions. Be influenced by the writers you enjoy reading.

Write

Read your work critically. Identify what you need to change to improve fluency edit and re-write it.

Learn

New vocabulary. Have a systematic approach to help you memorise unfamiliar terms.

Strategies for Academic Writing

- Relevant

Your writing should be clearly related to your essay question; make frequent references to the question.

- Organised

Develop a fluent narrative by linking the points you raise in a logically consistent way. FLOW/LINKS

- Follows academic conventions

For essays: Introduction, middle section, conclusion. Include a range of perspectives. Fully referenced.

Formality

- Adopt a formal voice - *unless told otherwise, refrain from using first person - - - I, We, Me!*

NB:

- Avoid trying to sound too self righteous or pompous
- Try to sound natural - - *avoid ambiguous / convoluted phrases*

The slides which follow provide opportunities for you to make a judgment about appropriate academic style.

Formality

Too informal

It's clear that the CEO of RBS's rushed decision to buy ABN Amro wasn't the smartest move.

or...

The combination of a domineering chief executive, an overly compliant management team and a false sense of urgency were crucial in RBS's disastrous decision to acquire ABN Amro.

or...

Too clever

The synthesis of solipsism with sycophancy within RBS's climate of elusory exigency evinced an impolitic acquisition of ABN Amro.

Precision

- Be specific – How many? When? Avoid vague generalities ... *“A number of people said..” / “A large number of businesses...”*
- Do not make things unnecessarily complex – try to express ideas clearly. *Don't use excessively long sentences or abstruse/obscure language!*
- Provide specific details, aim for fluent, clear descriptions... *NB: Avoid overly convoluted description... your 'real' aim at H.Ed is to be evaluative!*

Precision

Many young people drink too much. *Imprecise*

or... *Precise enough?*

One in four 16-25 year-olds consume more alcohol than the Government's recommended weekly maximum.

(expand/explain/reference)

or... *Too detailed?*

Twenty three percent of people aged 16-25, consume >140ml of ethanol alcohol (C_2H_6O) per week. *(reference)*

Objectivity

- Avoid narrow subjectivity – not everyone will agree with your argument. Your aim (unless told otherwise within an assignment brief is to be impartial / cover all angles).
- Structure your writing to show that you are questioning and analysing your sources - Use phrases like – Conversely, Equally, In Contrast, Nevertheless....
- Try to adopt a neutral voice, unless you are aiming for a clear and convincing conclusion – Use phrases like – It could be argued that... / The view is supported by.../ Despite this.... / An alternative perspective....

Objectivity

It is totally obvious that wealth needs to be distributed more fairly.

Too emotive

or...

It is clear from the above discussion that without greater redistribution of wealth, world economic growth will slow.



or... Objective, but clear?

The accumulation of capital by a small segment of the population correlates negatively with GDP growth.

Clarity

- Write to inform, not to impress
- You may know what you mean, but will your reader? *Ambiguous - - PROOF READ to check !*
- Avoid making value judgments – let your reader decide, after considering the evidence you present – *Avoid opinionated statements / phrases.*

Clarity

Equivocal

There are quite a few reasons why micro-SMEs often fail during their first year of operating.

or...

Clear

There are **three** main reasons why micro-SMEs can fail during their first year of operating: lack of capital; external market factors; and poor business planning.

or...

Clear & argumentative

Whilst micro-SMEs can fail for a number of reasons during their first year of operation – lack of capital, external market factors, etc. – the **most significant** factor is inadequate and inaccurate business planning.

Signposting – Words / Phrases

- Helps your reader to follow your argument
- Clarifies and confirms your sources
- Consolidates the points you are making
- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Signposting

Having discussed the scale of the problem, a possible solution can now be presented.

Highlight transitions

Viewing this from the perspective of Smith's (2012) model, what becomes clear is that...

Highlight your sources

Whilst many studies have considered the relationship between profitability and environmental responsibility, few have done so from an ethnological perspective.

Highlight your approach

Hedging

- Avoid over-confident, simplistic claims. There are (at least) two sides to every story!
- Avoid being over-cautious. Say it how it is - - with clarity
- If the evidence is inconclusive, you can state that further research is needed in the field

Hedging

This proves that the banking crisis of 2007 was caused by subprime mortgages.

Over-certain

or...

This suggests that subprime mortgages were a key factor in precipitating the banking crisis of 2007.



or...

Over-cautious

This seems to suggest that subprime mortgages might possibly be partly responsible for some aspects of the banking crisis of 2007.

Explaining Yourself Fully

- Helps your reader to understand
- Shows your reader that *you* understand
- Nurtures debate and reflection and avoids a soundbite style

Explain Yourself

Based on the above discussion, it seems reasonable to claim that...

Justification

As Marx explained: 'the bureaucrat has the world as a mere object of his action' (Marx 1843).

What does this mean?

As Marx explained: 'the bureaucrat has the world as a mere object of his action' (Marx 1843). In other words, bureaucracy creates alienation and indifference to others...

Shows understanding

Writing is a Process

Improvement takes time and effort – do not be hard on yourself, stay focused and keep practising! *Level 4 is an opportunity for you to learn and develop. Early modules are there to support you and provide constructive guidance - -eg; Study and Research Skills Module.*

Make use of your feedback – implement the necessary changes next time . *Feedback is normally detailed, so take heed of an comments made by tutors and act on this for future assignments*

Re-read previous essays you wrote last year and / or reports in the workplace, this will give you a base to work from....
Over time a clear sense of how your writing has improved.

Individual Task

- From reviewing the above slides outlining pointers for good practice, refer to them when considering the below question.

➤ *LOGISTICS CONCEPTS:*

- Q= In approx. 500 words discuss the advantages and disadvantages of product delivery
- **“Is delivery a benefit or a problem for customers and businesses”?**

- ANY QUESTIONS?



NEXT WEEK :

- Academic Writing and Assessments



- Essays
- Reports
- Projects
- Presentations
- Examinations.