



Study Skills

Academic Writing

Be objective: avoid subjective words such as: **nice; wonderful; worthwhile; usual; natural.** Your reader's understanding of what is 'nice', or 'worthwhile' may be very different from your own.

Never apologise to your reader for your perceived weaknesses; always write as though you are confident.

Avoid first person writing: I believe that....; I think this is the right course to take; To me, this argument is weak....; In my opinion....

Avoid second person writing. Do not address the reader: 'You can see that....'; 'When you write an essay, you should organise your ideas'.

Use third person constructions:

It is believed to be the case that....; This appears to be the right course to take; Clearly, there are weaknesses in this argument; It is the opinion of some writers that....

'It can be seen that....'; 'In a written essay, ideas must be organised in a logical order.'

Keep it simple

Often, all you need to do is leave out the first person phrase:

I believe that this author makes a strong argument

This author makes a strong argument.

I read book, ..., and I found his argument about....

In his book, ..., ... argues that....

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Useful words and phrases

Author believes....argues...shows ...demonstrates...illustrates...suggests...explains....

When you are not sure

Author appears to be arguing...to believe that...seems to suggest that....

Comparing/contrasting

Author 1 believes/argues that.... However, author 2 believes/argues that....

While author 1 argues..., author 2 disagrees. S/he argues/believes....

Author 1 suggests.... On the other hand, author 2 shows how....

From the general to the specific

Some authors believe... In particular, author supports this view....

Although some authors take the view that..., author takes the opposite view/has a different opinion about....

Generally, authors believe that.... However, other authors, amongst them, author1 and author2, say that...

Personal Writing	Academic Writing
emotional	logical
can be intuitive	uses reasoning
active voice: 'I find that....'	passive voice: 'It was found that....'
anecdotal	uses evidence
data from one person	wider database
subjective	objective
tangents may be important	keeps to a logical sequence

(Taken from Stella Cottrell, *The Study Skills Handbook*, 3rd edn, 2008, p.216.)