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Professional Writing Skills: The Basics

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Professional Writing Skills

- In addition to this *Overview of the Basics*, we have written a number of more in-depth guides, which will enable you to produce professional academic and business reports/assignments/essays that have a consistent structure and flow, right from the start and throughout the programme.
- These are available for you on Moodle.
- The guides cover the following topics in detail:

Professional Writing Guides

- Assignment Layout
- Table of Contents
- Formatting text
- Punctuation
- Using Paragraphs
- Using appropriate verbs
- Academic Argument
- Grammar
- Style
- Signposting
- Paraphrasing
- **SMART** Objectives

Content and Grammar

Write in the third person as if writing a newspaper article, except when you are writing a personal reflective account. Provide a short(!) introduction saying what you are going to talk about (required) and a conclusion (if it seems relevant and appropriate).

Use correct punctuation and don't have endless sentences which are essentially a collection of phrases separated by commas.

Use 'conjunctions' (joining words) such as '*and, but, also, because*' instead of too many commas and consider using shorter sentences when appropriate.

Content and Grammar

Take care when using proper nouns (names of people, places or things). Use Capitals and spell Company and Product names correctly.

Examples include Apple, iPad, iPhone, Microsoft, Amazon, eBay etc.

(This also includes local businesses and places of course).

Do not write in the '*chatty*' familiar tone and language that you would use with friends. There is no need to be too formal and 'stiff' in your tone though.

Content and Grammar

Past Tense

Right

I/You/We/He/She/They **did** some research

I/You/We/They **have done** some research

He/She **has done** some research

I/He/She **was** going out for dinner

We/You/They **were** going out for dinner



Wrong

I/We/He/She/They **done** some research

We/You **was** going out for dinner



Content and Grammar

Think of your assignment as a professional business report that you would produce for your Manager and use an appropriate tone and language. *Even if asked to produce an essay, similar professional standards apply.*

You will learn more about this during the course.

Avoid offering a personal opinion unless specifically requested to do so.

Try to remain detached and impartial in your writing, providing evidence of different viewpoints if relevant to the assignment brief.

Ensure you proofread your final submission for '*readability*'.

Content and Grammar

Students often have a tendency to begin well but become more rushed towards the end and some sentences either don't make sense or appear disjointed when read over again.

Have you used the same adjectives too many times in one paragraph, for example?

Avoid using words such as '*great*' as a positive adjective. Substitute this with good, excellent, useful, helpful etc.

Read your sentences aloud to yourself.

- Do they make sense?
- Have you repeated yourself?
- Does it sound interesting?
- Would you enjoy reading this assignment yourself?

Punctuation

Apostrophes

An apostrophe denotes **possession** (belonging to) so only use an apostrophe if you are talking about possession, as in the following examples:

- The boy's dog barked
- The teacher's book
- The four teachers' classes
- One week's experience

Apostrophes

Plurals (more than one) DO NOT
NEED Apostrophes!!

Two Coffee's  **WRONG**
*(this is actually saying something belongs to the
two coffees!)*

Two Coffees  **CORRECT**

100's of Free CD's  **WRONG**

100s of Free CDs  **CORRECT**

Writing in the Third Person

Writing in the third person

Don't address the reader:

“As a lawyer, **you** try to put **your** own feelings and viewpoints aside...”

Who is the ‘**you**’ referred to here?

In this case, ‘you’ is the lawyer.

So, you can write it in the third person like this:

Lawyers try to put **their**...

Writing in the third person

Drop the 'I'

If you worked at XXXX and want to comment on something that happened there and are trying NOT to say:

I worked at XXXX and noticed the following....

Don't say:

The author worked at XXXX and noticed the following...

Writing in the third person

Why not?

Don't use “The author ...” as a substitute for I in your assignments.

This is because you might want to refer to *the author* of a published work as a reference in your assignment and don't want to confuse the reader by constantly referring to yourself as “*the author*”.

This author makes....

The author makes...

Smith (1999) makes....

Writing in the third person

What to use instead?

Use something like:

Employees at XXXX noticed the following

Or

It was noticed by employees of XXXX that.....

Writing in the third person

Use of 'One' is best avoided:

One thinks this author... = stilted and awkward

One would not say that this author's point of view is not valid, but there is another way of looking at the question.

One would not say that Jones' (2018) point of view is not valid, but there is another way of looking at the question.

Better:

This author's point of view is valid; however, there is another way of looking at the question.
Jones' point of view is valid; however, there is another way of looking at the question.

One can see what this author/Jones is trying to say/arguing:

Better:

Jones' (2018) argument is clear, however....
The author's argument is clear, however....

Writing in the third person

How to say:

I agree with....

I disagree with.... Without using I

Expressing agreement

Smith (2015) argues in favour of.... *This is because....*

Smith (2015) argues in favour of *and* there are a number of good reasons/sound reasons for agreeing with his views/argument. Firstly.....

Expressing disagreement

Jones (2018) argues in favour of..... *however*, there are a number of reasons for disagreeing with her view. Firstly....

Jones (2018) argues in favour of... , *but* her view is brought into question in the light of....

Saving your assignment

Please name the file meaningfully when saving your assignment before submitting.

This will enable both you and your tutor to locate each assignment easily.

For most modules, you should save your files in the following manner, unless instructed otherwise:

Your Name Module Code Assignment

Examples for a Word document:

Joe Bloggs BMIHXXXX Assignment.docx