

What is academic writing?

1. Usually formal in style

- Formal style avoids colloquialisms, shortened versions of words (such as 'its' rather than 'it is'), abbreviations, cliches and slang.
- See some examples below.

Cliches	Colloquialisms (slang or conversational English)	Abbreviations
At the end of the day = ultimately,	Dodgy = unreliable	e.g. = for example, such as
In this day and age = today, now	Kids = children	e.t.c. = etcetera
Uphill battle = challenge	Sort of = somewhat	i.e. = in other words
		TV = television

2. Can use first or third person

- First person perspective (**I/me/my/we**) creates a personal voice. It is often used for reflection and writing about your own practice.
- Third person perspective (**he/she/it**) creates a removed voice. This is often preferred within reports or essays.



First Person: Personal



Third Person: Removed

3. Clear and concise

People often assume that academic writing should be difficult to understand. Instead, Sword (2012: 26-27) suggests using clarity, concision, precision and plain English.



Avoid being vague	Avoid wordiness
<p>Many researchers have discussed this.</p> <p>Lots of designers continue to follow this style today.</p> <p>Be precise; name specific examples.</p>	<p>Despite the fact that = although</p> <p>In view of the fact that = since</p> <p>The reason why is that = because</p> <p>(Strunk and White, 2000, pp. 32-33)</p>

4. Guides a reader

Make your writing easy to follow. Nygaard (2014, p. 99-100) stresses the importance of telling an engaging story that features a clear beginning (that sets the scene), middle (that uncovers your research) and end (that resolves everything). Transition words and phrases guide a reader through this story.

<p>Ordering</p> <p>Firstly, secondly, lastly</p>	<p>Adding</p> <p>In addition, similarly, moreover</p>	<p>Difference</p> <p>In contrast, conversely, unlike</p>	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Finally, therefore, thus</p>
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5. Remains neutral

- It is important to be **objective** and maintain a balanced and unbiased viewpoint. This is the opposite of **subjective** writing, which is emotion and opinion based.
- For a cautious style, use hedging language such as ‘could’, ‘might’ and ‘may’.
- Avoid heightening words such as ‘really’, ‘very’ or ‘extremely’.

References consulted

- Sword, H. (2012) *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Strunk, O. and White, E.B. (2000) *The elements of style*. 4th edn. London: Pearson.
- Nygaard, L. P. (2014) *Writing for scholars*. London: Sage.