



10 Features of Academic Writing Style

Academic writing is a formal style of writing. This means it is different to other types of writing, and different from spoken English. There are 10 features you can apply to make your own writing more formal and professional.

Feature	What you need to do
1. Use formal vocabulary	Use formal language rather than every day common language. Start by checking the Academic Word List . This is a list of the most frequently used words in academic writing.
2. Use formal verbs	Use formal verbs and avoid two-word verbs. For example, use 'establish' instead of 'set up', and 'decrease' instead of 'go down'.
3. Use full verbs	Use the full form of verbs and avoid using contractions. For example, use 'can not' instead of 'can't', and 'will not' instead of 'won't'.
4. Use formal grammar structures	Use formal structures/more complicated sentences such as clauses and noun phrases not just short simple sentences. For example: "It is important to consider all shareholders in this matter, they have the final vote." and "The internationalisation of the economy has created growth opportunities."
5. Use statements	Make very clear and definite statements. Avoid using rhetorical questions because they make the writing seem weak.
6. Use impersonal language	Use language such as 'there is' or 'it is likely that' rather than 'I think' or 'I feel'.
7. Be precise	Provide concise, clear, and accurate statements, avoid vague or ambiguous statements. Use data wherever possible. For example, use "The Coalition was formed in 1923, some 24 years ago, and have a conservative ideology" rather than "The Coalition has been destroying the country for about a century"
8. Use references and evidence	Support your statements with evidence, and ensure you reference these clearly. Check the Library referencing guide here: https://libguides.jcu.edu.au/referencing
9. Use hedging statements	Use hedging statements or tentative language such as 'may', 'its possible that', 'appears to' to qualify statements. This avoids absolute statements, which may be in error: "It is possible that the Liberal government is responsible for increased habitat destruction and environmental degradation".
10. Use transition words	Use transition words at the start of some sentences to connect ideas together in an explicit and logical way. 'In addition', 'In contrast', 'For this reason'. Do not use 'but', 'and', 'so' at the start of a sentence.

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