

# ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

# WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Academic writing

Non Academic Writing

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## Academic writing

- It is a formal way to write
- It is informative and factual.
- is well structured both at paragraph level and overall 'paper' level
- uses more formal vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure
- uses references from academic literature to support the points being made
- is a serious and professional way to communicate with your academic peers and university teaching staff.

## Non Academic Writing

- It is a casual informal way of writing
- Uses informal language
- It uses abbreviations, slang and contractions
- Is often written in the first person using 'I, we, us, our'
- It can be emotional

# Tips for Academic Writing

- **Avoid writing in the first person** ('I', 'we', 'us', 'our' etc.) unless writing a reflection or using your own work.
- **Avoid the use of questions**; academic writing should 'inform' rather than 'question'.
- **Avoid using emotive language**,  
example: It is a shame that the government is really resistant to this.
- **Avoid vague vocabulary** such as 'a lot', 'good/bad', 'get/give', 'things', etc.; use a thesaurus to find a specific alternative.
- **Do not use contractions**, e.g. isn't, won't, don't, can't, etc.
- **Do not use colloquialisms**, slang or jargon.
- **Do not write only of your opinions**; academic writing needs interpretation and research to underpin your thoughts or perspectives.

- 1. Inclusive language**
- 2. Be clear about your purpose**
- 3. Being clear about your audience**
- 4. Achieving the right tone**

## Inclusive language

Effective academic writing uses **inclusive language without bias**.

**Avoid gender-specific language** when it is inappropriate. For example, instead of referring to 'man' or mankind' to refer to humanity, use terms such as 'humankind' or 'people'.

## Be clear about your purpose

Be very clear about the specific purpose of the writing task – **what have you been asked to do?**

**Seek clarification if in doubt.**

Ensure that you are **following the instructions of the task strictly** and carefully.

## Being clear about your audience

The most obvious audience for your assignment is **'your lecturer/tutor' who is also the 'marker'**.

**Do not leave out any basic or essential information** because you think it is too obvious for them.

Your lecturer/tutor expects you to **show that you know the material and the subject matter**, and that you are able to perform the task at hand.

**Imagine that you are writing** for someone in order **to teach the person about the topic**. Consequently, you need to be explicit and clear.

## Achieving the right tone

The right tone in your writing depends on **how well you understand the nature and purpose of the task**

**The assignment type** – e.g. case study, report, reflective journal, literature review.

**Each assignment type has different requirements** with regard to the structure and appropriate language



# Writing at University

- Develop your critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Understand, analyse, interpret and evaluate disciplinary, professional and technical knowledge
- Develop, explain and justify your own ideas, position

## Three characteristics of academic writing

1

### Not just description

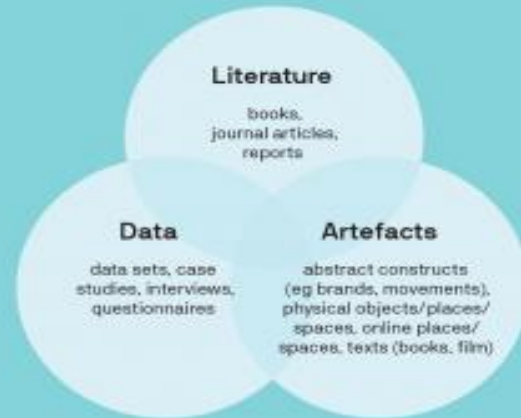
Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between what it means to write a description, an analysis, or a critique. Critical analytical writing incorporates aspects of all three but the focus is on analysing the evidence and using this to take a position, thereby developing an argument.

<b>Description</b>	provides background or summarises the topic
<b>Analysis</b>	identifies aspects and characteristics of the topic through deep engagement with evidence to develop an argument
<b>Critical Analysis</b>	articulates an argument by explaining the relationships between the aspects and characteristics of the topic

2

### Evidence

Your argument (position/recommendation etc) must be supported by evidence. What counts as evidence can vary from one discipline or profession to another, the diagram gives some examples. The boundaries between different types of evidence are not always clear and there is some overlap.



3

### Language

Move from more general (eg introducing) to more specific (eg expanding/elaborating) and back to more general (eg summarising) within the structure of the text. For example:

Paragraphs: topic - supporting - concluding sentences  
Essays: introduction - body - conclusion

#### When and what words to use:

<b>Paraphrase and cite evidence</b>	states, indicates, argues, as shown by, according to, as suggested in
<b>Express relationships</b>	similarly, alternatively, therefore, consequently, however, in contrast, in comparison, for example, as a result
<b>Evaluate</b>	considerably, effectively, significant, difficult, successful
<b>Moderate</b>	may, probably, often, frequently, most, some, in most cases, in this example, in this situation
<b>Signpost</b>	firstly, secondly, finally, in summary, in conclusion

Be precise and consistent with the words you use, especially for discipline-specific terminology.