

Higher Education Language & Presentation Support

Writing in Academic Style

HELPS (Higher Education Language & Presentation Support)

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- **Check out our self-help study resources on our website**
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Contact us

- Understand and better your academic writing style
- Use of grammar for academic purposes
- Develop better unity and cohesion in your writing
- Importance of structure & planning!
- Effective editing techniques / meet criteria

Workshop program



Exercise

- **Q1:** How do you rate your academic writing skills and abilities?
- **Q2:** How confident are you about your knowledge of academic style, grammar, punctuation and spelling in your written work?
- **Q3:** How do you currently edit or proof your work?

Warm- Up Questions

- Developing academic style + formality
- Having good structure in writing
- Developing appropriate vocabulary
- Importance of editing
- Polishing your presentation

Our checklist today

Developing Academic Style



- Q: What are some of the features of academic register/ writing?

Features of Academic writing

Features of Academic Writing

- It has few personal pronouns, such as 'I', 'we' or 'they'.
- It is highly structured & has a very formal style.
- It is impersonal and non emotional -usually fact based.
- Its grammar makes greater use of the passive tense.
- It is often research based and not opinion based writing. It uses references and quotes to show this.
- It features no jargon or slang words.
- It has no colloquialisms. e.g. *The kids in school nowadays.*
- No grammatical contractions e.g. 'can't, won't, doesn't etc.
- Demonstrates high levels of critical thinking and critical analysis.

Bad example

The insight I gain about me is that I have improve my study habits. I have learned about different ways of note taking. which I only knew about mapping and outlining methods of note taking. Even though I have never used the other methods. Communication skill are important, now I have learned more techniques to help me being careful of what I do online as well. The course has help me learn more about facts from fiction.

Better example

It is **imperative** that students at university gain adequate study skills as well as effective study habits. There are several ways that this can be achieved. Some useful techniques that should be **acquired** are mind-mapping and effective note-taking methods. Furthermore, building effective communication skills are an **essential element** to university life which are also transferred later in life into the working environment. Therefore, it can be stated that learning, building and maintaining a range of study skills will enhance students' learning, participation rates and success whilst undertaking **tertiary** education.



Exercise

What's wrong?

- Please find at least 5 problems with this piece of text.
- In my essay I will describe the great benefits we can all get by coming to university. University is a great place to expand your mind and learn new concepts and theories (Smith J.D 2008). I'll explore and examine 3 different elements in my essay.
- Let's make it more academic! We'll re-write it

What are some of the most common mistakes university students make?

Native speakers =

- Poor overall structure
- Poor academic style – too casual
- Informal use of vocabulary
- Writing in the 1st person 'I'

Non-native speakers (the above... plus) =

- Subject verb agreement – They has a lecture.
- Use of articles (a, an, the)
- Preposition errors (in, for, at)
- Countable/uncountable / sing/pl nouns (evidences)
- Verb tense
- punctuation

- Answers the set question in a logical structure/argument
- Develops logical arguments which draw conclusions
- Matches the marking criteria
- Demonstrates critical thinking and critical analysis
- Uses reliable academic sources to validate and underpin arguments made
- Appropriate academic style with good standards of grammar, punctuation, spelling and presentation
- Work that shows thought, reflection & complexity of ideas

What are Lecturer's looking for?

Developing Grammar



- Like anything –you need to practice!

Also....

- **Read** what you want to write.
- Write often in the style required.
- Use grammar books to self-teach.
- Get friends/peers to check/tutor

How to improve your knowledge of grammar.

- Passive voice
- Increased nominalisation
- Neutral –non-emotive

Essential elements



Exercise

- What is the passive voice?
- Why do we use it in academic writing?

Passive Voice / 3rd person

- Increased use of the Passive Tense –more formal, less emotional and more authoritative.
- Practise:
 - A. The lecturer presented the SWOT analysis marketing theory.
 - B. I will analyse the key factors related to monetary policy in Australia.
 - C. I will present the findings of the questionnaire and survey relating to the rise and fall in domestic interest rates over the past decade.

Academic Grammar

- Nominalisation is the process of turning verbs (and adjectives) into their respective **noun forms**
- Makes the ideas more abstract and sound more formal/academic.

Q: Which is the nominalised version?

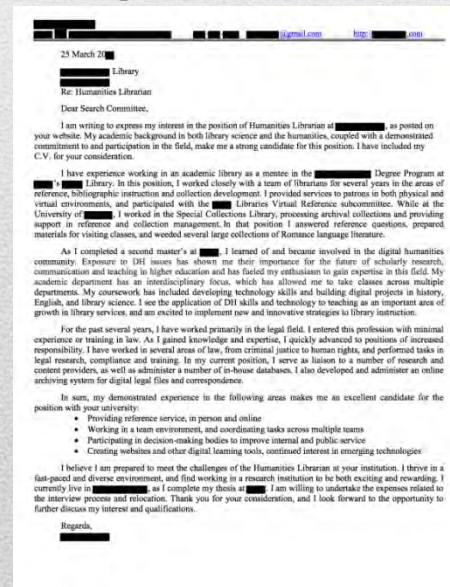
- **A)** Researchers examined evidence relating to modern building design which showed that...
- **B)** An examination of evidence relating to modern building design showed that...

Nominalisation

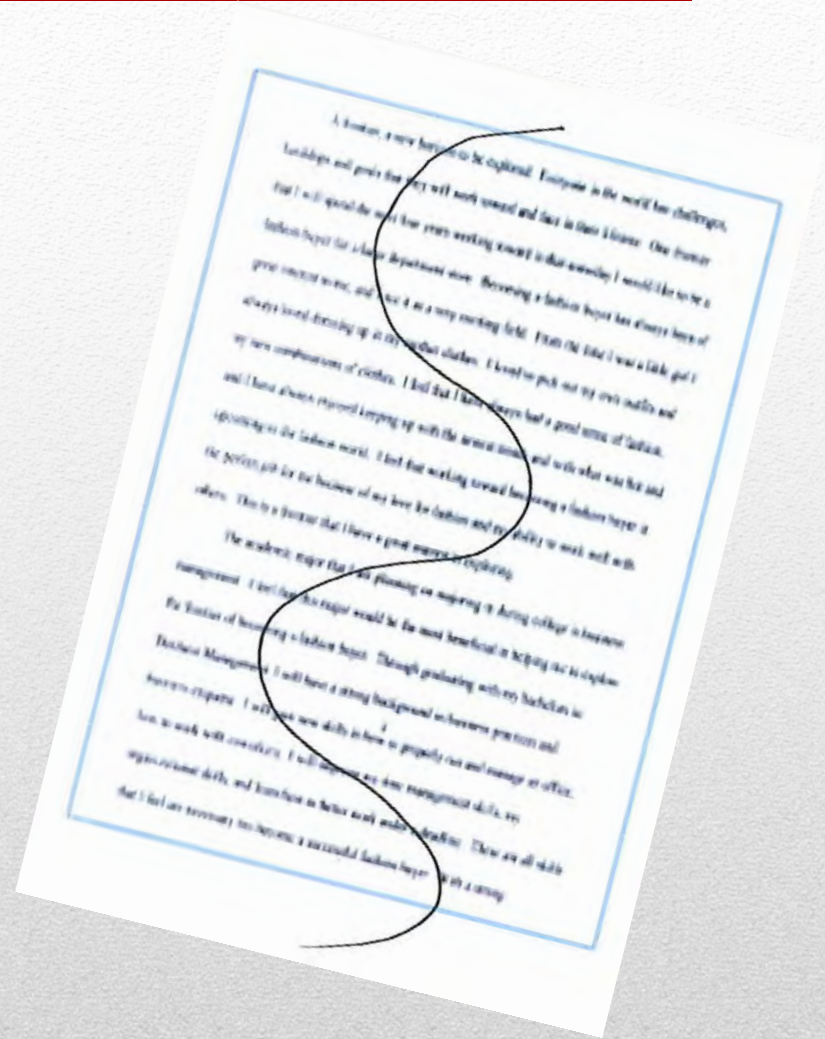
#	Nominalisation	Verb Form	Adjective form
	Analysis	Analyse	?
	?	Believe	n/a
	?	Compare	comparable
	?	Conclude	concluding
	?	suggest	suggested
	difficulty	[To be] difficult	?

Exercise / word forms

Developing Your Style



- Smooth flowing
- Logically linked ideas
- Logically linked text
- Order of importance
- Relevant ideas



Developing cohesion

➔ Developing Unity:

- Having paragraphs all related to the main topic sentence ensures unity in the writing.
- Keep to your controlling idea (topic sentence)

Developing Unity & Cohesion

➔ Cohesive Devices

- Cohesive devices are words and phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs together, to create a smooth flow of ideas. Cohesive devices are words such as transitions, pronoun references and the repetition of key supporting ideas.

Developing Cohesion

- There are many transition words and phrases in English that are used in academic writing to connect sentences together or relate ideas to one another. Here is a table of some of the common examples.

Time markers	Comparison transitions	Contrast Transitions	Additional Information	Giving Examples	Cause and effect	Concluding ideas
Since Secondly Whilst Before	Compared to Similarly As...as Likewise	However Yet In contrast	And Furthermore For instance Moreover	For example Particularly Generally In general For instance	Therefore As a result because	Finally In conclusion To summarise



Exercise

- Add transitions to this passage to make it smoother:

Computer games have been popular for several decades now and many households have at least one such game on either a mobile phone device or personal computer. It can be said that playing such games causes social, educational and personal problems of several kinds both to youngsters and society. Youngsters who spend a great deal of time in front of a computer monitor can be said to be 'missing out on life' and not fully and actively engaging with the world around them (Herfson 2014) . The skills which they need in order to interact with others and succeed in the real world are not being nurtured and developed. Studies have shown that the recent generation of young males is physically growing less than previous generations due to lack of exercise (Clarke 2009 & Johnson & Higgins 2007). They are more likely to be overweight and less healthy, so more prone to diseases such as diabetes. The overuse of computer games by teenagers can be seen as having a significant effect upon society in a detrimental manner.

(Source: Jeffs 2014)

Exercise

- In academic writing, to develop unity in paragraph writing, it is essential that the pronoun use is consistent and relates to the same idea, person, thing being described.

Example: Climate Change is affecting most nations on the planet. It is affecting the way people are living on Planet Earth as it is not able to adapt quickly enough to the changes in the climate system nor are the human beings living on it. They simply cannot escape the affects of climate change if governments take no action. (source: climatechange.org)

- Q: What do the underlined pronouns refer to in the above text?

Effective Pronoun Usage

- Unity and cohesion are **vital** elements in your writing. They ensure that your writing is logical, well connected, relevant to your topic sentences.

Importance of Unity and Cohesion

Effective Vocabulary





Exercise

#	Informal	Formal/ Academic
1	kids	?
2	University is great	?
3	There are many ideas	?
4	Students get knowledge	?
5	In discussing the good things	?
6	And, this essay will look into	?

Use of Vocabulary

- Need to avoid generalisations & broad sweeping statements
- e.g. People living in hotter climates are happier than people in colder ones.
- e.g. Small sized businesses are not as profitable as larger ones.
- e.g. Poor education leads to crime.

Being Cautious

- Developing a cautious style is necessary in many areas of academic writing e.g.
- People living in hotter climates tend to be happier than ones living in colder countries.
- Studies suggest that smaller companies may not be as profitable as larger ones.
- Poor levels of education may be a resulting factor in higher crime rates in some instances.

Developing caution



Putting it all together

- Let's see at how the grammar, vocabulary and structure work together.
- Let's also identify the VOICE in academic writing.

Text Analysis



Exercise

In commenting on professional nursing practice in large scale medical institutions, Klein & Smith (2009) state that effective nursing skills include excellent communication traits, ability to communicate at every level within the medical environment and also the ability to effectively delegate to other staff members. However, these are common observations that apply to most medical and nursing professionals of course. These also link with the notion put forward by Brown (2012) who states that being able to empathise with patients is a critically important skill for nursing professionals around the world. These are interesting comments which demonstrate the skill sets that are needed for nursing professionals in large scale health organisations. However, it can also be argued that further skills and attributes are needed, which might include.....

Let's Analyse this text

Whose voice is here? In red? / In green?

In commenting on professional nursing practice in large scale medical institutions, Klein & Smith (2009) state that effective nursing skills include excellent communication traits, ability to communicate at every level within the medical environment and also the ability to effectively delegate to other staff members. However, these are common observations that apply to most medical and nursing professionals of course. These also link with the notion put forward by Brown (2012) who states that being able to empathise with patients is a critically important skill for nursing professionals around the world. These are interesting comments which demonstrate the skill sets that are needed for nursing professionals in large scale health organisations. However, it can also be argued that further skills and attributes are needed, which might include.....

Let's Analyse this text

What are the phrases in red doing?

In commenting on professional nursing practice in large scale medical institutions, Klein & Smith (2009) state that effective nursing skills include excellent communication traits, ability to communicate at every level within the medical environment and also the ability to effectively delegate to other staff members. **However, these are common observations** that apply to most medical and nursing professionals of course. **These also link with** the notion put forward by Brown (2012) who states that being able to empathise with patients is a critically important skill for nursing professionals around the world. **These are interesting comments which demonstrate** the skill sets that are needed for nursing professionals in large scale health organisations. **However, it can also be argued that** further skills and attributes are needed, which might include.....

Let's Analyse this text

What are the phrases in blue doing?

In commenting on professional nursing practice in large scale medical institutions, **Klein & Smith (2009) state** that effective nursing skills include excellent communication traits, ability to communicate at every level within the medical environment and also the ability to effectively delegate to other staff members. However, these are common observations that apply to most medical and nursing professionals of course. These also link with the notion put forward by **Brown (2012) who states that** being able to empathise with patients is a critically important skill for nursing professionals around the world. These are interesting comments which demonstrate the skill sets that are needed for nursing professionals in large scale health organisations. However, it can also be argued that further skills and attributes are needed, which might include.....

Let's Analyse this text

- Q: How many drafts of your assignment do you do before you hand-in your work?
- Q: What are the minimum number of drafts you should do, before hand-in?

Editing and Proofing Academic Writing

1. Proof and edit for **clarity of meaning**.
2. Proof and edit for **style and grammar**.
3. Proof and edit for **presentation/typos / refs**.

Edit X 3 rule

- When proofing and editing your academic work, look out for the common mistakes that native and non-native university students make that were outlined before.
- Also- get someone to read your work for you.

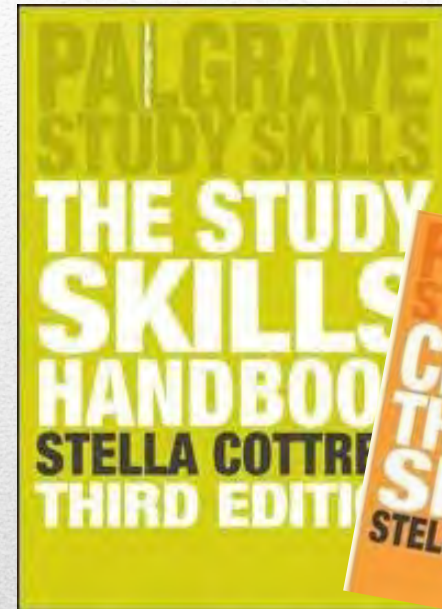
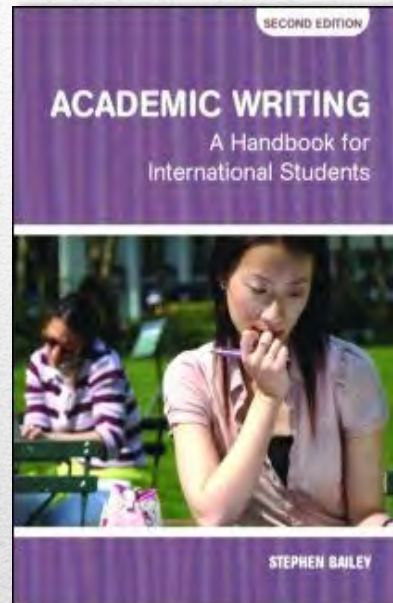
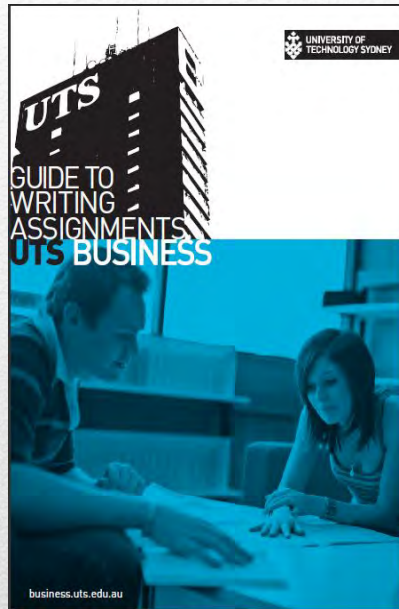
Editing

- Formal register / NOT chatty!
- Not written in the 1st person/ no 'me', 'I' or 'my'
- No contractions (isn't, can't, won't)
- Highly structured
- Avoids vague imprecise language
- Research based
- Impersonal & emotionally neutral
- Not opinion based writing usually
- Shows range of academic vocabulary
- Lack of personal pronouns
- Good levels of accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation needed


Academic writing Summary

- HELPS Centre / self help resources / **sample assignments**
- Lecturer/ Faculty staff
- Internet searches
- Books / Bookshop – Co-Op/Abbeys/Bridge
- Your Classmates/Friends/Peers
- <https://www.facebook.com/UTSHELPS>

Further resources / help



Useful Further Resources



Do you have any questions about today's workshop?

- **Good luck with your academic writing.**

Slides written by & prepared by Jonny Wells / UTS HELPS
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