

ACADEMIC WRITING

is:

- ✓ clear and explicit about the subject
- ✓ objective and detached about the arguments and conclusions drawn
- ✓ rational

uses:

- ✓ evidence (correctly referenced) to support the arguments or question perspectives
- ✓ a critical approach to the subject

Introduction: should:

- ✓ Contain a brief explanation of the topic and context
- ✓ Identify the main themes or concepts
- ✓ Outline what the topic means – its relevance
- ✓ Describe the approach to the topic
- ✓ Set a clear direction and structure to the essay

Main Body

Contains all the points to be made in the argument and presentation of the material in a series of paragraphs

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is series of sentences;

- ✓ the first sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph
- ✓ the other sentences develop the topic of the paragraph: use relevant definitions, examples, details, evidence, quotations, citations
- ✓ the final sentence leads up to the next paragraph - use **transition words** (see handout on the Study Skills page on Moodle) to indicate to the reader the 'route map' of the essay

NB a paragraph is longer than one sentence and shorter than a whole page!

Conclusion

Contains **no new** material. It:

is a reminder of:

the question posed in the essay title
the important features of the argument main themes

is a summary of :

the main points
the specific evidence presented

explains the significance of the conclusions

what general points can be drawn from the writing as a whole?

The conclusion should **clearly signal** to the reader that the piece of writing is completed and leave a **clear impression** that the purpose of the text has been achieved. Remember to refer back to your title – you could use words from the question to prove that you have answered the whole question.

Think about the lasting impression your reader will have.

TIPS FOR GOOD ACADEMIC WRITING

Use source materials – you do not have an opinion – you must remain emotionally neutral and use evidence (all referenced) from lecture notes; reading, case studies. Avoid writing in the first person. This means avoiding the use of phrases like ‘I think’ or ‘I agree’. Instead use the third person, ‘It can be argued that’ for example, sounds more academic. Other useful phrases might be ‘It can be seen that’, ‘It has been found that’.

Be cautious. Academic writing generally sounds cautious in drawing conclusions. For example a writer might say ‘the evidence suggests that’ rather than ‘this proves that’. Use the full form of words and phrases, not contractions like ‘don’t’ or ‘can’t’.

Be precise. Avoid phrases like ‘some people disagree’ and ‘some psychologists agree that’. Give the reader enough detail for them to know exactly what you are talking about.

Avoid ‘lazy’ words such as got, did and nice. For example, rather than saying ‘a lot of research was done’ say ‘extensive research was conducted’. Rather than saying ‘Jones did a study’ say ‘Jones conducted research’.

Avoid slang and colloquialisms.

Avoid unnecessary words and phrases such as ‘a man called Jones (2005) ...’
Simply say ‘Jones (2005) found...’

Develop an academic vocabulary. You will already be coming across new terms in your course. Don’t use these terms without understanding them but if you do use them appropriately your writing tends to sound more precise and hence more academic.

If you use someone else’s ideas then you should reference them. To try and pass ideas off as your own is called **plagiarism**. Even if you put the ideas into your own words they still belong to the original author and this should be acknowledged. You can do this as follows: ‘as Jones (2005) argues’ or you can give a direct quote followed by the author’s name, date and page number of the quote. Use quotes sparingly.

Proof read your work. Reading it out loud is an excellent way to check the style.

Finally – an essay needs a **final draft**.

References

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