



Academic Writing

Academic Writing Style

- Academic writing is a particular style used in formal essays and other assessments for your course. It requires formal language, a logical structure and should be supported by evidence.
- It is a skill that you will need to learn and develop across your time here at Loughborough College whilst undertaking your undergraduate course.



Conciseness

- There is no great mystique about an "academic writing style". The most important thing is to keep your writing clear and concise, and make sure that you get your ideas over in a comprehensible form.
 - Conciseness, in academic terms, can be described as simply disregarding irrelevant or unnecessary material (or 'waffle'!) from your writing when conveying an idea, without omitting important information.
 - Focus on those ideas that seem to imply a basic point of view that can further be explored and developed into an argument within the assignment.
 - It is the clear expression of these ideas that will impress your tutors!



Informal English – Contractions

- You will need to avoid some aspects of informal English within your written work, and although you are asked to write as concisely as possible, this also includes removing your use of contractions.
 - A contraction is a shortened version of the written and spoken forms of a word, syllable, or word group and should not be used within your assignments, e.g.:
 - Isn't, wasn't, doesn't...
 - Always use the full form, e.g.:
 - Is not, was not, does not...



Informal English – Avoiding the ‘first person’

- In academic writing, you should avoid using the first person or any personal language (e.g. I, my, we).
- Starting your assignment with “**My** assignment will look at...” is not appropriate academic language.
- It would be more formal to refer to the assignment rather than yourself. For example “**This** assignment will look at...”, “**This** paper will examine/discuss...”.



Informal English – Avoiding the ‘first person’

- Furthermore, avoid making statements such as:
 - “Based upon the literature **I have read**”, “**I think** that...” Instead, you need to make it clear in your writing that you are being **objective**.
 - Rather, use statements such as: “Based upon the literature, **it could be argued that...**”.
- This shows your reader that you are not presenting your own thoughts and views, but providing them with an argument that is based upon the research and evidence in the literature you have read. This is often referred to as ‘hedging’...



Hedging

- ...Or avoiding commitment! In order to put some distance between what you are writing and yourself as writer, and to be cautious rather than assertive, you should use impersonal subjects instead, for example:
 - “It is **believed** that...”, “It can be **argued** that...”
 - “The results **suggest** that...”, “It **could** be said that...”
- Furthermore, use ‘attitudinal signals’ such as:
 - “**Arguably**, the difference may indicate...”
 - “**Ideally**, the contrast between these two authors should have revealed...”
 - “**Unexpectedly**, the results showed a positive outcome from the study...”

(These words allow you to hint at your attitude to something without using personal language.)



Hedging

- Avoid sexist language (e.g. **chairman**, **mankind**/**chairperson**, **humankind**). Furthermore, remove he/she and herself/himself by instead, making the subject plural by using passive verbs to avoid stating the 'doer'.
 - “**Tests** have been conducted that...”
- Use qualifying adverbs such as ‘some’, ‘several’, ‘a minority of’, ‘a few’, ‘many’ to avoid making over-generalisations.
 - “The literature suggests that **several** authors agree with this assumption...”
 - “It could be said that a **minority** of business leaders disagree with Smith’s viewpoint...”



Hedging

- Avoid the use of emotive language (e.g. appalled, shameful, miracle, tremendous). This type of language plays a role in persuading the reader toward the writer's point of view. Be objective rather than subjective.
 - “This **shameful** use of propaganda was seen to influence subjects...”
 - “**Extremely** positive results were obtained in the study by Smith et al. (2017)...”
- Although persuasive, these words do not help to argue your case in formal writing as they appeal to emotions rather than helping to create a reasonable and justified conclusion, based on the evidence.



Informal English – Colloquialisms

- A colloquialism is a saying that expresses something **other** than the literal meaning of the words it contains. For example, saying "I wasn't born yesterday" to mean "you can't fool me" would be considered a common expression, aka 'slang', in English, which wouldn't translate to the **literal** meaning of being born yesterday.

*"Retirement is something most of us must **face sooner or later**, therefore..."*

*"Retirement is **inevitable**, therefore..."*



Informal English – Colloquialisms

Colloquial Expression	Formal Alternative
above board	legitimate
reached a happy medium	reached an acceptable compromise
get through it	survive, penetrate
part and parcel	intrinsic to
easier said than done	more difficult in practice
beyond a shadow of doubt	definitely
in recent years	recently
pay lip service to	support through words but not through actions
got out of hand	was no longer under control
a stumbling block	point of contention
explored every avenue	investigated alternatives



Informal English – ‘Run on’ expressions

- Avoid the use of ‘run on’ expressions such as ‘and so forth’, ‘and so on’ or ‘etc.’. Instead try to complete the sentence properly, for example:

Informal (includes run on)	Formal Alternative
Nurses must take into consideration patients' dietary needs resulting from allergies, medication, medical conditions and so on .	Nurses must take into consideration patients' dietary needs resulting from allergies, medication and medical conditions.
Public transport includes vehicles for public use on the roads, airways, waterways etc .	Public transport includes vehicles for public use, such as buses, trains and aeroplanes.



Informal English – Rhetorical Questions

- A rhetorical question is a question someone asks without expecting an answer. It could be said then, if used, the writer assumes the reader knows the answer, or the writer goes on to answer the question in the text.
- Such questions are inappropriate for academic writing as:
 - Readers might not know the answer
 - You should not risk your point being misunderstood
 - You should, as a piece of formal documentation, make your point clear and 'up front'



Informal English – Rhetorical Questions

Informal (includes rhetorical question)	Formal
Industrial sites cause vast amounts of environmental pollution, so why do we still use them?	The question surrounding the continued use of industrial sites, given their vast pollution production, still remains.
What is a team? A team can be one person but will usually end up including many more.	A team can include one person but usually involves many more.
The question is, however, does the "Design School Model" provide a practical solution to the problem of how to formulate strategy?	It is questionable whether the "Design School Model" provides a practical solution to the problem of strategy formulation.



Informal English – Verbs/Adverbs

- **Verbs** – conveys an action, an occurrence, or a state of being.
- **Adverbs** – typically express things such as manner, place, time, frequency, degree or level of certainty.
 - Answering questions such as how?, in what way?, when?, where?, and to what extent?
- **Adverbs within the Verbs:**
 - Adverbs should be placed within the verb group rather than in the initial or final positions.
 - In informal English, adverbs often occur as clauses at the beginning or end of sentences; for example:

Informal	Formal Alternative
Then the solution can be discarded.	The solution can then be discarded.
The blood is withdrawn slowly .	The blood is slowly withdrawn.



Summary

- Academic writing can seem a daunting task, and we certainly don't expect students to be able to pick it up immediately.
- It takes time to get used to writing in, what might be for some, a completely new and alien way. However, those that try to incorporate the above points and are prepared to hone in on and develop their writing skills, will ultimately gain further marks for their assignments.
- Remember, your main aim is the clarity and concision of your work written in a formal academic manner.

