

Quick guide to academic writing

Your ability to write in an academic style will be assessed continuously on your degree programme. So what is it?

Writing style

The language used is more formal and considered. Colloquial and conversational English is not used

Precision and accuracy are important – choose the word/phrase that best expresses your idea

Use the terminology that is common to your subject area. Avoid using complex language for the sake of it

Avoid using 'I'. Most academic pieces are written in the 3rd person. However, in some subjects, reflective pieces can be written in the first person. Ask your tutor for guidance

Generally use short sentences and straightforward structures

Use the present tense when introducing evidence from other authors, unless you are presenting the development of ideas/facts in a chronological context

Avoid repetitions

Do not ask questions – the purpose of the assignment is to answer one not pose new ones

Do not use contractions such as 'can't', 'don't' or 'isn't' – always use the full phrase.

SPAG: spelling, punctuation and grammar

Check it, check it and check it again!

Ask someone to read through – they may see errors that you cannot see.

Evidence

One of the main characteristics of academic writing is that it is always supported by evidence from the literature. This means that facts, theories and ideas from other authors should be used to back up the development of your arguments

In turn, this means that other authors' ideas must be clearly acknowledged in the text and in the reference list or bibliography.

The essay structure

The basic structure of an essay can be divided into 3 sections:

- Introduction **'say what you are going to say'**
- Main body **'say it'**
- Conclusion **'say what you have said'**.

The main body is further divided into clear and logically sequenced paragraphs

An essay plan, where you identify the key sections of your assignment, is essential in achieving effective structure.

Presenting your essay (general guidelines – check with your tutor)

Your work should be word-processed

Font size 12

Arial is the font style most commonly used

Use double spacing

Leave 2 lines between paragraphs

Provide margins on the left and right hand side

Include page numbers on all pages

Do not go over the word count by more than 10%

Never go below the word count

Reference using Harvard referencing (both in-text and by providing a reference list or bibliography) – see Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2013) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 9th edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.