



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University
西交利物浦大學

Academic Writing

CPT202



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EAP in Y2

D: Key academic writing skills

- analyzing the writing task question
- generating research keywords
- how and where to look for sources
- summarizing key points from an academic article
- narrowing the research focus
- writing a report introduction
- choosing a clear focus for the literature review
- identifying sources relevant for literature review
- identifying research gaps from literature
- synthesizing source information
- identifying and developing evaluation criteria from literature

D: Key academic writing skills

- understanding the characteristics of the evaluation criteria
- writing a well-structured evaluation
- understanding and describing operating principles of a technology
- describing processes
- the language used for describing processes
- summarizing aims of research and research methods
- summarizing key report findings, limitations and recommendations based on evaluation in conclusion
- writing contents and structuring the report
- creating cohesive paragraphs
- using effective linking devices
- using appropriate topic-specific vocabulary

Please revisit Y2 EAP course materials

E: Academic Integrity

- using IEEE referencing style
- incorporating in-text citations (integral and non-integral)
- writing a reference list
- referencing a diagram with captions
- checking whether citations match the references
- citing more than one source for the same idea

E: Academic Integrity

- avoiding secondary citations
- identifying types of sources for referencing purpose
- understanding elements of reference list elements
- appropriate paraphrasing & summarizing of source information to avoid plagiarism
- understanding the concept of 'intent to deceive'





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Topics

- How to write a technical or research paper
- The structure of a paper
- Writing a first draft
- Editing and polishing
- English style
- Choice of publication venue



Basics

- Types of word
- Elements of text
- Why write?
- A writing philosophy





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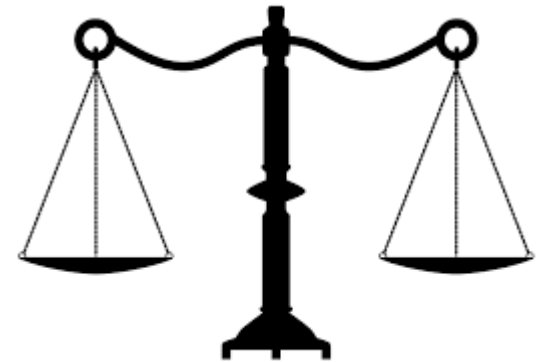
Academic Writing

- Academic writing is:
 - Reasoned
 - Impartial
 - Logical
 - Structured
 - Supported



Reasoned and Impartial Writing

- Application of Critical Thinking
 - Thinking well and applying sound intellectual standards to your thinking.
 - Self-evaluation, thinking about your thinking and being sure that you are not jumping to conclusions.



Critical Thinking

- Assessment of the relationship between claims and the evidence
- Exercising judgement in order to interpret and evaluate arguments and evidence
- Questioning assumptions
- Openness to new ideas balanced with appropriate scepticism



A Critical Thinker

- Questions and evaluates information, for example:
 - *What is really important here?*
 - *How does it relate to what I know already?*
 - *What standpoint does the writer have?*
- *Are there any weaknesses in the argument that is being put forward?*
- *What other opinions are there on this topic?*
 - *Do I agree or disagree with the writer?*



A Critical Thinker

- Does not just accept what they read
- Does not simply make assertions
 - bases arguments on evidence and sound reasoning
- Identifies flaws or weaknesses in an argument
- Recognises his or her own assumptions, prejudice or point of view
- Develops a reasoned, logical argument



Structured Writing

- Introduction
 - usually one paragraph explains what you are writing about and how you plan to do it
- Body
 - A series of paragraphs (80-90%) of the essay.
Gives details and evidence to answer the question
- Conclusion
 - usually one paragraph, briefly summarises main ideas and shows you have answered the question
- References
 - list of sources used



Logical Writing

- Writing must have a flow and a logical order
 - A good way to plan an assignment is to put down your ideas in bullet points using one page (separate from your essay draft). You can also create a ‘mindmap’ for your ideas or list a series of questions.
 - Another method is to create a skeleton with nested bullet points or notes
- *It's very important to plan out what you want to say before you begin writing.*



Paragraphs

- A paragraph introduces and develops one idea
- It includes
 - Topic sentence(s) introducing the idea
 - Supporting sentence(s)
 - A conclusion sentence
- Paragraphs should be linked and flow logically on from each other



Exercise – to mark them

- The learning has five files:
 - A.pdf
 - B.pdf
 - C.pdf
 - D.pdf
 - E.pdf

Please read them and discuss with your classmates



Supported Writing

- It is important to draw on other sources in your writing.
 - Using sources strengthens your writing / gives credibility to what you are saying
 - Shows you've done research and have synthesized the findings into your own words
 - Shows your participating in the intellectual conversation within your discipline



References

- You can incorporate material you read into your own writing by:
 - **Quoting** - use the exact words of the author(s). When quoting you usually place the words in quotation marks (“...”)
 - **Paraphrasing** – putting the information in your own words
 - **Summarising** - express the main points of when it is someone else's opinion, theory or information.
- When you incorporate the work of others in your writing you must always reference your sources.



Why reference others work

- To acknowledge another person's intellectual work
- To make it possible for your reader to locate your sources independently
- To demonstrate your knowledge of your field and make your writing more trustworthy
- To avoid being accused of '**plagiarism**' (using other people's words/ideas as if they were your own)- “intellectual kidnapping”



When references aren't required

When you include information that is:

- **general knowledge** (e.g. that Barack Obama is the President of the U.S.A.)
- information that is **common knowledge in your field**
- **ideas** that are definitely **your own**, and **findings or insights** from **your own research**





Writing Style

- A good piece of writing is:
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Complete



Clarity and Conciseness

- Avoid
 - Long words
 - Long Sentences
 - Passive voice
 - Adverbs
- Use
 - Examples
- Be focused
 - Prepare a skeleton of your document and stick to it.
- Be honest
 - About what you have done, your claims and the evidence you have to back it up.



Long words

“Never use a long word where a short one will do.”

“Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.”



George Orwell, Politics and the English Language, 1946



Long words

The idea of writing is to share your ideas and findings. If the language you use is too difficult then a lot of people (including a lot of non native English speakers) will not be able to understand your work.



Honesty

Be honest and transparent about what your claims, evidence and conclusions. Don't try to hide behind the language.

‘The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns, as it were, instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.’

- George Orwell



Cut Words

Be concise. Don't write more than you have to and don't make the reader skim over useless text.

“If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out”

George Orwell, Politics and the English Language, 1946



Exercise

- Delete the words we don't need
 - You may often find that there are a number of words contained in your writing that can be safely eliminated without any kind of danger to your meaning whatsoever.



Solution

- Delete the words we don't need
 - You may ~~often~~ find ~~that~~ ~~there are a number of~~ words ~~contained in your~~ ~~writing~~ that can be safely eliminated without any ~~kind of~~ danger to your meaning ~~whatsoever~~.



You may often find that there are a number of words contained in your writing that can be safely eliminated without any kind of danger to your meaning whatsoever.

You may find words that can be eliminated without danger to your meaning.



Concise Content

- You can do the same thing with your content by removing anything that doesn't contribute directly to the point you are making.
 - “In writing, you must kill all your darlings.”
William Faulkner
 - “The most important things to remember about back story are that (a) everyone has a history and (b) most of it isn't very interesting.”
Stephen King



Long Sentences

A sentence should express only one idea or a clearly connected set of ideas.

Not, for example,

“Home care has been expanding tremendously over the past few years partly due to recent technological advances that enable assessments and treatments to be a part of the home setting which at one time could only be performed within the hospital environment.”



Exercise

Break up this sentence.

“Home care has been expanding tremendously over the past few years partly due to recent technological advances that enable assessments and treatments to be a part of the home setting which at one time could only be performed within the hospital environment.”



Solution

“Home care has been expanding tremendously over the past few years. This is partly due to recent technological advances that enable assessments and treatments to be a part of the home setting. At one time this could only be performed within the hospital environment.”



Passive vs active voice

- Active voice
 - Active subject is first. This is direct, assertive, clear
 - “Steve loves Amy”
 - “I heard it through the grapevine”
- Passive voice
 - Active subject is not first. This sounds weak and convoluted.
 - “Amy is loved by Steve.”
 - “It was heard by me through the grapevine,”
 - Only use the passive voice if you don’t know what the active subject is.
 - “Mistakes were made”



Exercise

Put this into the active voice

“The experiment was repeated with 100 users who we selected according to experience with technology”



Solution

Passive voice

“The experiment was repeated with 100 users who we selected according to experience with technology”

Active voice

“We repeated the experiment with 100 users who we selected according to experience with technology”



Adverbs

Adverbs, like quickly, slowly, angrily, softly etc., describe verbs. These can look clumsy and fail to add information. Readers often skip over adverbs when reading.

“The road to hell is paved with adverbs”

Stephen King



Example

With adverbs

“The users completed the test quickly.”

(vague)

Without adverbs

“The users all completed the test within five minutes.”

(better, more impact and more detail)



Completeness

- Avoid generalization
- Avoid statements without warranting
 - Convincing Argument =
Conclusion (containing claims) +
Adequate Warranting (based on sufficient
appropriate evidence)
- Try to answer all the questions a reader might
have at any stage of reading the document.



Focus

- Know the message you want to convey before you start to write.
- Prepare an outline of your paper with the main points you want to convey and stick to these.
 - Prepare outlines of Sections, Subsections and individual paragraphs too if this helps
- Don't be distracted by,
 - Irrelevant points in other papers
 - Trying to perfect your writing style (leave this until a later draft)
 - Doubts about your methodology or claims (its already too late to change this)



Focus

Don't be distracted from the point you want to convey by the process of writing..

“The defense of the English language ... is not concerned with fake simplicity..

What above all is needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way around”

- George Orwell



General writing strategy

- Take the perspective of the reader
 - Answer all the questions
 - Clarity over content
 - The text should flow in a logic order
 - Form complete arguments with proper warranting
 - Less is more (cut out what is not necessary)
- Write in your own words





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Writing methodology

- Getting started
- Skeleton
- First Draft
- Tidying-up

Sentences

- Most ideas can be expressed in a simple sentence with the following sentence structure.
 - <noun> <verb> <noun><verb> <noun><verb>
<noun>
 - Cats chase mice.
 - Information Visualisation improves our capacity to see patterns in complex data.



Sentences

- Other ideas can be expressed using a slightly more complex structure
 - <noun> <verb><noun> <conjunction>
<noun><verb><noun>
 - provided that, and, but, because, so, yet etc
 - Google maps are more popular than Baidu Maps
because people prefer the more flexible interface.
- The title of your document is just a sentence that summarizes the whole project



Paragraphs

We use words to build sentences, and sentences to build paragraphs.

“Words create sentences; sentences create paragraphs; sometimes paragraphs quicken and begin to breathe.”

Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*



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Paragraphs

- Topic sentence(s)
 - Summarize the whole paragraph
 - Normally the first sentence(s)
- Detail/ Justification sentence
 - Two or three sentences to add information or warranting
- Conclusion sentence
 - What we want the reader to take from the paragraph
 - Be sure that this is reasonable given the warranting (i.e. any argument must be convincing)



Sections and subsections

- Topic paragraph(s)
 - Summarize the whole (sub)section
 - Normally the first paragraph(s)
- Detail/ Justification paragraph
 - Two or three sentences to add information or warranting
- Conclusion paragraph
 - What we want the reader to take from the section
 - Be sure that this is reasonable given the warranting (i.e. any argument must be convincing)



Document

- Abstract
 - Summarize the whole document
 - The first section
- Detail/ Justification sections
 - Sections to add information and warranting (Related work, methodology, results, discussion etc)
- Conclusion section
 - What we want the reader to take from the document
 - Be sure that this is reasonable given the warranting (i.e. any argument must be convincing)



Do you see a pattern?



Skeleton

- If we try to write sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph, we can lose our flow of thought.
- Sometimes it's best to sketch out the whole document with the main points before we start writing.
- Often in the form of nested bullet points



Skeleton

Home > Google Docs for Writers >

The Best of Both Worlds

Not always online. But want to use Google Docs. Or, prefer to work on desktop and use Google Docs to share/store/collaborate.

- **Rationale**

Some people find Google Docs UI limited and limiting. Prefer to work in desktop application like Microsoft Word,

- **Using CloudConnect with Word**

- What it is
- Point to download file for installer
- How to use it

- **Using OOo2gd**

- What it is, and what its name means
- Point to download
- Outline how to install
- How to use it

Download documents from Google Docs, or upload documents from Ooo/LibreOffice

- **Explain using offline Google Docs -- how to set up and how to use it in browser or mobile app**



First Draft

- Fills in the skeleton with writing.
 - Turn notes into sentences
 - Turn sentences into paragraphs
 - Turn paragraphs into sections



Later Drafts

- Remove ambiguities
- Try and remove areas of confusion
- Refine the logical flow of the document
- Answer all the questions that still might be open for the reader
- Cut unnecessary text

“To write is human, to edit is divine.”

Stephen King



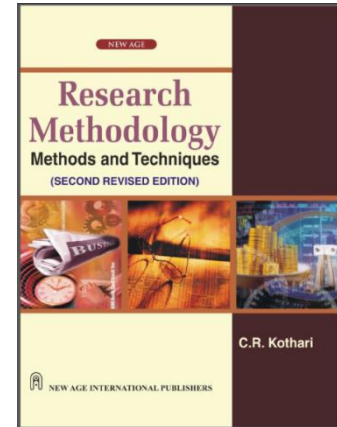
Exercise

- Create a skeleton for your assignments.



Resources

- Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates
 - Mike Wallace and Alison Wray
 - SAGE Study Skills
- The Elements of Style
 - William Strunk Jr.
- On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft
 - Stephen King



Exercise – to re-mark them

- The learning has five files:
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- C.pdf
- D.pdf
- E.pdf

Now re-mark them with your analysis

