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Academic Writing at CODE

👥 Owner	Ⓕ Fabian Geier
≣ Tags	
≣ Department	

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The Goods, aka CONTENT

1.) What is academic writing and why is it important?

1. It is the **style** broadly used by educational and research institutions around the world to present and defend points of view.

2. If the writing is intended to **convince** someone of something, we use the word **argument.** Alternatively, the writer might compare two things, but usually there will be a conclusion on some aspect of the comparison, and then the term is **thesis**, which can be occasionally confused with an undergraduate culinary document also known as a thesis, so be careful.

3. It is characterized by being **clear, concise, focused, structured, and supported by evidence,** usually facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrases.

4. It attempts to be **objective** and the writer therefore strives not to reveal personal emotions or biases.

5. There are discipline variations, but most share **general characteristics and forms.**

6. Academic writing and journalism have in common that both disciplines are **investigative** and aim for **precision** in the search for truth.

7. The two **differ** in that academic writing contains more **information density** and **is less time-sensitive**. In addition, there can be a predefined set of terminology in academic writing depending on the topic.

8. In summary, academic writing consists of a **purposeful and factual style** without overly judgmental or emotional elements. Individual persons are typically not the focus, rather the facts and outcome of the investigation, in other words, the pieces of evidence, are the "stars of the show," as it were.

2.) What is technical writing and how does it differ from academic writing*?*

1. Historically, technical writing was "documentation," **explaining a technical process for a limited audience**. This was typically, but not always, the dreaded user's manual.

2. Today, technical writing has expanded to include a number of different forms: reports, summaries, business briefs, press releases, emails, etc.

3. In other words, any time technical information is conveyed in written form can be considered technical writing.

4. **Technical writing** differs slightly from academic writing in that:

- typically it describes a technical system

- the passive voice is to be avoided at all costs

- clarity, conciseness, and cohesion are key elements

1. CODE has a course in SE for those who wish to explore this medium. It is required for students in SE but others might find it useful as well.

2. "**Documentation"** now typically refers to any piece of writing that explains solely the use, functionality, creation, or architecture of a product, the **"how to"** portions of a text.

3.) What is *journalistic writing*?

1. The basic task of journalism is to provide the society with relevant information and thus contribute to the formation of opinion.

2. It acts as a monitoring body of political, economical and social processes by revealing shortcomings (investigative journalism) or calling attention to certain developments.

3. Journalists make the distinction between **opinion-based** articles (such as columns, editorials, essays, satire) and **factual articles** (e.g. updates, reports, news stories, analyses).

4. In general, opinion-based articles assume a sort of foreknowledge by the reader, whereas factual pieces do not.

5. Factual journalism aims for objectivity by including as many perspectives as possible. Sources should be transparent and verifiable.

6. In reports and features, protagonists (actors, individuals or groups) are typically the focus of attention. Journalists use scenic elements, atmosphere and emotions to create empathy. Reports and features focus on the effects of recent changes.

7. Tabloid journalism or "yellow press" journalism creates populist and/or emotional content. Typical elements are shocking headlines, eye-catching pictures and exaggerated news to attract readers. The writing style is easy to understand, and often uses rather short sentences and a simpler vocabulary than other journalism. Texts can be biased and show questionable moral principles.

8. Tabloid journalism is not per se not-so-good journalism, but tends more frequently to exceed ethical and press law limits.

9. Good journalism in terms of quality is based on the following elements:

- independent coverage

- balanced reporting; efforts to be objective

- accuracy

- transparent/verifiable sources / no unfair practices in research

- commercial-free

- sensitive wording and political correctness

1. Special ethical principles in journalism include:

- trial coverage: presumption of innocence applies

- protection of personality rights and human dignity

- show restraint when youngsters are involved

- no evaluation of religion or ideology

Academic Writing at CODE

4.) What is a "thesis statement" (or "the argument") and why is it the *most important part* of an academic essay?

The beating heart of an academic essay is the ***thesis statement.*** This should be a clear and unambiguous statement of the writer's ***point of view***, and is usually an expansion of the essay's title. It can also be called "***the argument***"

1. ***Every idea in*** the entire essay should focus back in some way on the thesis statement, either in support of or in contrast to it.

2. The thesis statement is usually pretty clearly made in the introduction of the essay, but this can vary. It is often found as the last sentence in the first paragraph.

3. Perhaps the most important thing about a thesis statement is that it is ***specific and focused rather than sweeping and general.***

5.) What is the *main academic writing style* at *CODE?*

The writing style at CODE is modeled on a general academic style used in most US and UK institutions, nicknamed for CODE purposes the **OWL Model** since many of the supporting concepts come from the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University in the United States. There is more information about the OWL and other academic writing resources and a direct link under the Citation section.

6.) What *types of academic writing* are most commonly seen at CODE?

1. **General essays.** These are described in the style and structure section below. The guidelines are often word length, and other constraints will be decided by the faculty.

2. **Book reviews.** Different faculty have slightly different perspectives, but the basic STS/CODE model is as follows:

3. Summarize the topic and argument of the book in one or two sentences.

4. Describe the "architecture" of the book and its strategy of presentation. In other words, how does the author structure the argument? Is there a chronological development through the chapters or rather a thematic set of descriptions? Does the author use case studies to explain the topic? A close study of the Table of Contents should help you with this section.

5. In an objective way, describe the "main talking points" of the book. What are the key "take-away" ideas the author is trying to stress?

6. In a more subjective way, what caught your eye and made you think more deeply as a result of reading the book? Where did you agree or disagree with the author? What stood out to you? What would you want others to know or understand?

7. Be sure to include a full citation somewhere in the paper; often students put it at the very end.

8. **Reflection papers.** Again, different faculty have different perspectives on this type of assignment; be sure you clarify any concerns.

While a reflection paper clearly wishes the focus to be on your thoughts and opinions, you will most probably need to refer to portions of the text/s from time to time.

Even in a reflection paper, when you use a quote or a paraphrase from another source, be sure to cite it correctly. Some faculty are *quite adamant* on this point and many students have had to rewrite papers or even retake classes for failing to observe this protocol.

1. **Power-Point presentations**. Although these are not "papers" *per se*, they still have citation requirements.

Any quotes, figures, tables, or embedded material in a PPP must be correctly cited. OWL has an extensive section on all forms of material.

Standard academic language remains constant, for example, contractions (don't won't can't) are still inappropriate.

7.) What is an *Exposé?*

In the German academic context used at CODE, an exposé is a summary of your preliminary research design and a guide that will help your research advisor understand the steps you plan to take to write your research paper or thesis.

An Exposé should typically be no more than five or so pages in length and should cover your research aim or question, your research method or methods, and why you chose that method to address your thesis topic.

8.) What is a *Bachelor's Thesis?*

At CODE the bachelor's thesis process is guided most directly by faculty advisor/s. This information is provided as a basic introduction and should be seen as supplemental to any discussion or agreement between a student and their faculty members.

Here is a link to the official CODE documentation regarding the Bachelor's Thesis:

https://www.notion.so/codeuniversitywiki/Bachelor-Thesis-Guidelines-and-Formal-Requirements-db7284d3591347e49c0208cbf001a72b

An undergraduate (bachelor) thesis is typically:

1. a significant (25-50 content pages) piece of research writing on a single subject;

2. linked to the student's main topic of study;

3. completed during the final year of a degree program;

4. chosen in conjunction with a faculty advisor/s;

5. based on the student's own field of study and interests; meant to prove that the student is capable of:

- independently identifying a topic

- doing relevant research

- formulating a topic and research question

- carrying out targeted research either quantitatively or qualitatively to discover the outcome

- writing up the results.

A typical student thesis might contain the following elements, here presented in outline form:

Table of Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the study

1.2 Research question and/or hypothesis

2.   Literature Review

2.1 Subtopic 1

2.2 Subtopic 2

2.3 Subtopic 3

2.4 Conclusion

3.   Methodology

3.1 Study population

3.2 Data collection

3.3 Analysis

4.   Research outcomes

4.1 Subtopic 1

4.2 Subtopic 2

4.3 Subtopic 3

5.   Discussions and Limitations of Research

5.1 Discussion

5.2 Limitations

5.3 Opportunities for Future Work

6.   Conclusion

7.   References

8.   Appendices

9.) What is a *Capstone Project?*

Here is a link to the official CODE documentation regarding the Synthesis Semester, complete with the answer to this question and a lot of other key information you will need:

https://www.notion.so/codeuniversitywiki/Synthesis-Semester-FAQs-a05302c3cabf47dc94d328a3fb69cfe8

Here is a link to the official CODE documentation regarding the Capstone Project:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RLykNHhON3f5K8WYkxMTNX4hfsZHuKL93lcnOnedXAw/edit

Style and Structure of Academic Writing

10.) What basic *types or styles* of academic essays are there?

1. A *narrative* essay which tells a story. This type is useful to describe the *progression* of something or the *development* of an idea. The writer usually starts in the past and comes up to the present and perhaps future.

2. A "*compare and contrast*" essay which typically looks at *two different categories and explores similarities and differences.* Comparing two different applications for a smartphone might be a good example.

3. A "*cause and effect*" essay which looks at the *reasons* (causes) for something OR the *outcomes* (effects) of something. An example might be the CAUSES of global climate change OR the IMPACTS (effects) of global climate change.

4. An "*argumentative*" essay which requires the writer to take a position and defend it. "Robots should have as many rights as humans," for example. Here the writer *has already decided something* and plans to convince the reader through carefully chosen evidence.

11.) What is *the structure* of the typical academic essay?
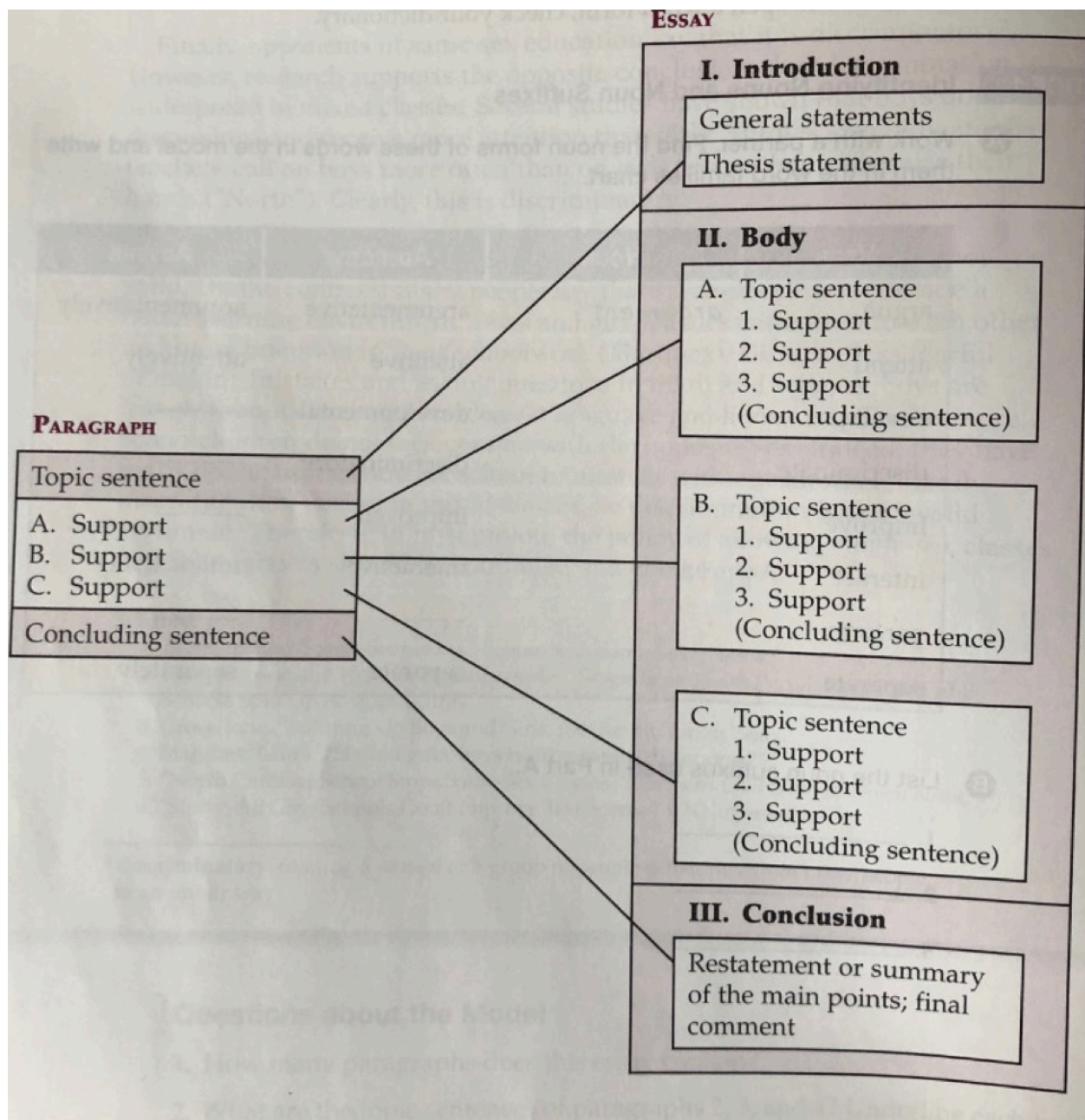
In addition to choosing the *type* of essay as described above, there is a clear *format* to follow.

The academic essay has *three main parts*:

1. An *introduction:* One (occasionally more) paragraph containing a hook (something to catch the reader's attention), some general background information, and the thesis statement. This will be an entire section in a bachelor's thesis.

2. One or significantly more **body or content paragraphs**, each one focusing on a single aspect of the thesis statement;

3. A final **summary and conclusion** paragraph that restates the main ideas *and concludes the essay with a strong statement of the writer's proof and opinion.*

4. A **reference section** with a list of the works consulted in the writing of the paper.

Here is a sample outline with all the elements except the reference section which goes at the end.

ESSAY

I. Introduction

General statements

Thesis statement

II. Body

A. Topic sentence
   1. Support
   2. Support
   3. Support
   (Concluding sentence)

B. Topic sentence
   1. Support
   2. Support
   3. Support
   (Concluding sentence)

C. Topic sentence
   1. Support
   2. Support
   3. Support
   (Concluding sentence)

III. Conclusion

Restatement or summary of the main points; final comment

PARAGRAPH

Topic sentence

A. Support
B. Support
C. Support

Concluding sentence

This outline is found on page 78 of *The Longman Academic Writing Series Volume 4: Essays* (2017) by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue, copies of which are available in the CODE library.

12.) What is an example of the academic writing *process*?

There are two ways that essays are usually written.

1. Sometimes the writer ***is assigned*** the topic by the instructor. In this case, consult Section 10 above and choose the style that best suits the topic. Often the sources have already been chosen for you and it is a matter of focusing on the assigned question and structuring the argument accordingly.

2. Sometimes the writer is assigned a ***paper of a certain length*** and a general topic. This can be more interesting, but also puts more pressure on the writer.

    a. In this case, the writer's challenge is to FOCUS the topic, and to develop a thesis statement.

    b. Once a narrow and focused topic is chosen, then the choice of sources and the entire writing process is easier.

3. Once the topic is chosen or known, the writer should ***find reliable sources and read them selectively***. Note interesting off-topic ideas and sources but try not to "go down too many rabbit holes," meaning "try not to get distracted by ideas that fall outside the realm of your topic."

4. ***Take notes*** in your preferred fashion, either electronically or on old-fashioned paper. Always keep in mind and try to develop *three or four supporting sections* that will develop your argument or support your thesis.

5. Write a ***general outline*** of your topic. Note where different pieces of information will fit in the structure.

Suggestion: write the body paragraphs FIRST, the conclusion SECOND, and the introductory paragraph LAST.

13.) What *grammar forms* are important for academic writing?

In general, academic writing in English uses:

The ***simple present***;

The ***simple past,*** and

The ***past perfect***.

HOWEVER, before you get too comfortable, academic writing uses grammatical features that are a bit more complicated, including:

1. The ***passive voice*** ("Mistakes were made") is used selectively to show a focus on the outcome of an event, not the actor. "Cancer was cured," for example, rather than "Scientists in a lab cured cancer."

2. ***Modals*** (would, could, should, might, may) are used to show potential and possibility

3. ***Hedging*** (the word used to describe the use of modals to show less than 100% certainty)

4. ***A variety of reporting verbs*** (asserted, demonstrated, suggested, exclaimed, stated, confirmed) that can show perspective.

14.) What are other *stylistic concerns* to keep in mind?

1. ***Unity.*** That means that everything *in a single paragraph* relates to a single topic, one that comes directly from the thesis statement

2. ***Coherence.*** This means that the writer leads the reader through the article by the use of *connective words,* such as "first, second, third" or "then, therefore, as a result, however, in other words"

3. ***Lack of contractions***. Don't use don't. Academic writing uses the full words, such as "do not." Save any contractions for quotes.

4. ***Spell out the numbers from one to ten***; use Arabic numerals for 11 and up.

Plagiarism and Working with Documentary Material (Attribution and Citation)

15.) What is *plagiarism* and why is it so significant in the Western academic context?

The University of Oxford defines plagiarism as "presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement...Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional." Here are some examples of types plagiarism:

1. ***Complete plagiarism.*** This is also known as intellectual theft or stealing. In this case, the assumed writer takes ***an entire piece of writing*** created by someone else and submits it under their name. If you buy a paper from a writing service and submit it as your work in a CODE class, this is complete plagiarism.

2. ***Direct plagiarism.*** This is where the writer copies, word for word, a chunk of text originally written by someone else into their own paper ***without attribution.*** The way to introduce such material is either through a direct quotation or through a paraphrase, both citing the original author.

3. ***Paraphrasing plagiarism***. THIS IS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF PLAGIARISM. In this case, a writer uses a chunk of material from another author, ***changes a few words,*** but still does not attribute the original writer. If one uses material and changes a few words, this is paraphrasing and is appropriate but only when the original author is noted.

4. ***Data fabrication and/or falsification***. In these cases, data is either completely made up or "tailored" to fit the situation at hand. This type of plagiarism is particularly significant in medical and scientific research, of course, but misleading information can often have negative unintended consequences.

16.) What is *attribution* and why is it important?

1. Attribution means ***directly referring*** to where some piece of information comes from. If the information used in the work is not 1.) common knowledge or 2.) the writer's personal opinion, the reader must be told where it has come from, in other words, ***where or from what source*** the writer found the evidence.

2. ***An example of attribution***: Artificial intelligence is a rapidly growing field in computer science. Some experts are concerned that the pace of development in AI creates challenges not only for the field but literally for everyone on the planet. Writing in edge.com, Elon Musk warns, "The pace of progress in artificial intelligence (I'm not referring to narrow AI) is incredibly fast. Unless you have direct exposure to groups like Deepmind, you have no idea how fast—it is growing at a pace close to exponential. The risk of something seriously dangerous happening is in the five-year time frame. 10 years at most."

17.) What are the different forms of *evidence* used in an academic essay?

1. **Facts and statistics**. Pretty clear. But show where they are from. Reputable websites are best, those with .edu or .org, for example. Be sure to include the citation.

2. **Quotes.** Also pretty clear. Quotes in academic writing should be short and powerful, like the Elon Musk example above. Show the citation.

3. **Paraphrases.** This means putting someone else's ideas in one's own words without any interpretation. Show the citation.

4. **Summaries.** Take an entire article or long section of an article and reduce it to a few words. Show the citation.

5. Information that is widespread **common knowledge** (Paris is the capital of France, trucks are bigger than cars, CODE is a new university in Berlin) does NOT have to be cited.

18.) What is *citation* and why is it important?

Citation is:

1. a written reference to a specific work (book, article, website);

2. produced by specific author/s or organizations, or in other words;

3. the ***exact location in the intellectual world*** where the reader can find the specific information the writer is stating.

4. In APA, citation for a ***book*** looks like this:

Roose, K. (2021). *Futureproof: Nine Rules for Humans in the Age of Automation*. John Murray.

Different academic and intellectual disciplines have different citation methods and formats (at CODE the standard is APA, American Psychological Association although faculty may specify others).

A nice and easy-to-use way to get a citation from the resource you want, in the style you want, is this online resource: zoterobib.

As mentioned above, the writer MUST use citation every time a piece of evidence is introduced that is not:

- common knowledge of a reader or

- the opinion of the writer.

If citation is not used, the writer risks ***PLAGIARISM,*** as described above, which is using or assuming the words of ideas of another as one's own.

Citation is necessary both within the document (in-text citation) as well as part of a list of ***References*** at the end of any academic paper. The in-text citations are shorter and more targeted than those found in the References section

The ***default resource*** for APA citation for CODE (unless you have a different direction from faculty) is the Online Writing Lab (OWL) maintained by Purdue University in the United States. Go to https://owl.purdue.edu, click on the right side of the page.

The OWL page is more than a source for citation; rather it is a broadly comprehensive site to explain academic writing and to give in-depth citation support. CODE students are encouraged to visit this site early in their CODE careers to review the amount of information and support available there and to refer to it whenever needed.

Another excellent resource is the Citation Guide at the Technical University of Munich at https://www.ub.tum.de/en/citation-guide

19.) *Additional resources*

1. In addition to the OWL (Online Writing Lab https://owl.purdue.edu), there is an additional very helpful website that students often use, known as SCRIBBR Knowledge Base. It is a kind of project similar to Wikipedia in that it is created and maintained by a group of people, not a university.

The link is https://www.scribbr.com/knowledge-base/

1. If you are new to academic writing and have never written an academic essay before in your life, there is a very useful book we can recommend. There are several copies of it in the CODE library. It is **_Longman Academic Writing Series Number 4: Essays_**, written by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue and published by Pearson. It is helpful if you are new to essay writing; the topics include: paragraph structure, using outside sources, expanding from a paragraph to an essay.