**words and phrases that are considered inappropriate in** [**academic writing**](https://www.scribbr.com/category/academic-writing/)**.**

**Too informal**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INCORRECTO** | **EJEMPLO DE USO INCORRECTO** | **ALTERNATIVA CORRECTA** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A bit | The interviews were *a bit* difficult to schedule | The interviews were *(difficult/somewhat difficult)* to schedule |
| A lot of, a couple of | *A lot of* studies | *(Many/several/a great number of/eight)* studies |
| America | A researcher in *America* | A researcher in *(the United States/the US/the USA)* |
| Isn’t, can’t, doesn’t, would’ve (or any other contraction) | The sample *isn’t* | The sample *is not* |
| Kind of, sort of | The findings were *kind of* significant | The findings were *(somewhat significant/significant to some degree)* |
| Til, till | From 2008 *till* 2012 | From 2008 *(until/to)* 2012 |
| You, your  (i.e. the [second-person point of view](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-writing/avoid-2nd-person/)) | *You* can clearly see the results | *One* can clearly see the results  *The results can clearly be seen* |
| Also | *Also, the participants were in agreement on the third question* | *(Moreover/Furthermore), the participants were in agreement on the third question* |
| So | *So it can be concluded that the model needs further refinement* | *Therefore it can be concluded that the model needs further refinement* |
| And | *And the participants were all over the age of 30* | *The participants were all over the age of 30* |

**Too unsophisticated**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bad | A *bad* result | A *(poor/negative)* result |
| Big, humongous | A *big* sample | A *(large/sizable)* sample |
| Get | This model *gets* attention | This model *receives* attention |
| Give | This chapter *gives* an overview | This chapter *(provides/offers/presents)* an overview |
| Good | A *good* example | A *(useful/prime)* example |
| Show | The below figure *shows* | The below figure *(illustrates/demonstrates/reveals)* |

**Too vague**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stuff | People are concerned about their *stuff* | People are concerned about their *(belongings/possessions/personal effects)* |
| Thing | The report presents many *things* | The report presents many *(details/findings/recommendations)* |
| A long time, a while | This topic has interested researchers for *a long time* | This topic has interested researchers for *more than 30 years* |

**Too exaggerated**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Always, never | Researchers *always* argue that | Researchers *(frequently/commonly/ typically)* argue that |
| Perfect, best, worst, most (or any other superlative) | The *perfect* solution to the problem | *(An ideal solution/one of the best solutions)* to the problem |
| Very, extremely, really, too, so (or any other intensifier) | This theory is *extremely* important | This theory is *(important/critical/crucial)* |

**Too subjective**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Beautiful, ugly, wonderful, horrible, good, bad | A review of literature yielded many *good* articles | A review of the literature yielded many *relevant* articles |
| Naturally | The participants *naturally* wanted to know | The participants wanted to know |
| Obviously, of course | The results *obviously* indicate | The results *clearly* indicate |

**Generally unnecessary**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Has got/have got | This dissertation *has got* four chapters | This dissertation *has* four chapters |
| Serves to, helps to | This chapter *serves to explain* | This chapter *explains* |

**Generally incorrect**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Literally | The students *were literally dying* to participate | The students were *(dying/very eager)* to participate |
| Would of, had of | The study *would of* considered | The study *would have* considered |

**Other tips**

In general, you should also try to avoid using words and phrases that fall into the following categories:

* **Jargon** (i.e., “insider” terminology that may be difficult for readers from other fields to understand)
* **Clichés** (i.e., expressions that are heavily overused, such as *think outside of the box* and *at the end of the day*)
* **Everyday abbreviations** (e.g. *photos*, *fridge*, *phone, info*)
* **Slang** (e.g. *cops*, *cool*)
* [**Gender-biased language**](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-writing/avoid-gender-bias/)(e.g. *firemen*, *mankind*)

**Exceptions**

* Reflective reports and [personal statements](https://www.scribbr.com/graduate-school/personal-statement/) sometimes have a less formal tone. In these types of writing, you may not have to follow these guidelines as strictly. The [preface](https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/preface-dissertation/) or [acknowledgements](https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/acknowledgements/) of a dissertation also often have a less formal and more personal voice than the rest of the document.