

English Academic Writing: Unit 1 Academic Writing Style

WU Ting 语通未来 6月1日

Hello, everyone! From today, we will be posting a serial of wechat mini-lessons here to help you review our course.

Let's begin with Unit one: Academic Writing Style

Unit One

Learning Objectives

- To understand the style and features of academic discourses;
- To distinguish between the academic style and the personal style of writing;
- To recognize various levels of formality;
- To use appropriate words and sentences in academic writing.

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First, you need to consider the following questions:

- How is academic writing different from other forms of writing?
- What are the key characteristics of academic writing?

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Ideas for reference:

Generally speaking, academic writing:

- is more objective;
- is more complex;
- has a more formal structure;
- uses more referencing.

Then, look at some specific rules at various language levels.

III. Language Focus

A. Word Choice

- ◆ Academic voice can be well expressed by choosing words.
- ◆ A distinctive feature of academic writing style is choosing the more formal ones.
- ◆ The English language often has two or more choices to express an action or occurrence.

a phrasal verb vs. a single verb

Less formal style: Researchers *looked at* the way strain *builds up* around a fault.
Academic style: Researchers *observed* the way strain *accumulates* around a fault.

B. Formal Grammar and Style

- ◆ Sentence structures in academic writing are more complex.
- ◆ Academic writing should NOT be complicated. It should be relatively easy to follow, written in a clear, direct style.
- ◆ Recommendations for maintaining a formal academic writing style.
- **Avoid contractions.**

Export figures *won't* improve until the economy is stronger.
 Export figures *will not* improve until the economy is stronger.

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■ Use the more appropriate formal negative forms.

not . . . any → no
 not . . . much → little
 not . . . many → few

The analysis *didn't* yield *any* new results. ->
 The analysis yielded *no* new results.

The government *didn't* allocate *much* funding for the program. ->
 The government allocated *little* funding for the program.

This problem *doesn't* have *many* viable solutions. ->
 This problem has *few* viable solutions.

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■ **Limit the use of "run on" expressions, such as "and so forth" and "etc."**

These semiconductors can be used in robots, CD players, *etc.* —>

These semiconductors can be used in robots, CD players, *and other electronic devices.*

■ **Avoid addressing the reader as "you".**

You can see the results in Table 1. ->

The results can be seen in Table 1.

■ **Limit the use of direct questions.**

What can be done to lower costs? —>

We now need to consider what can be done to lower costs, *or*

We now need to consider how costs may be lowered.



C. Linking Words and Flow

Sentences that are too short and poorly connected can be irritating to read. Linking words and phrases can help a writer maintain flow and establish clear relationships between ideas.

- The most common linking words are the **conjunctions** 'and,' 'but,' 'or,' 'when' and 'if'. However, **adverbs** (like 'however') are also very important for linking thoughts and making smooth transitions between them.
- Tips for linking - Using 'This' Or 'It'; Using 'which' or 'that'



Finally, you need to enhance your writing skills by getting familiar with different styles and be able to convert the texts from one style to another.

IV. Academic Writing Skills

A. Recognizing Different Styles

- There are a number of different styles of writing that you may encounter in the course of your life. Styles may be formal or informal, and will usually vary to fit the audience and the medium of publication. However, the style will also affect how you read and interpret the document concerned. Understanding the writing style will help you to put your writing into perspective.



B. Choosing Appropriate Styles

- Academics want to ensure that their work is clearly understood, and there is no room for ambiguity. They also want to justify their point of view. They therefore support their writing with evidence, either from their own work, or that of others. This means that academic texts are usually precise, reliable, formal and structured.

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These rules of academic writing are made through years of research by seasoned scholars, which may influence and define us, but they do not need to crush and confine us.

The author of *Scientific Writing = Thinking in Words* has great news: “If you are precise, clear and brief, then you do not have to conform to any other specific rules to be a good scientific writer.”

Good luck with your paper writing!

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