

ACADEMIC WRITING

What is Academic Writing?

Academic writing is the formal writing style used in colleges and universities. It is what students are expected to produce for classes and what professors and academic researchers use to write scholarly materials.

What are Some of the Main Characteristics of Academic Writing?

ACADEMIC WRITING IS formal in tone / register and style:

- it uses appropriate (more formal / academic / professional) language and proper tenses.
- it communicates the writer's ideas / thoughts CLEARLY and CONSIDERATELY.

ACADEMIC WRITING IS NOT personal:

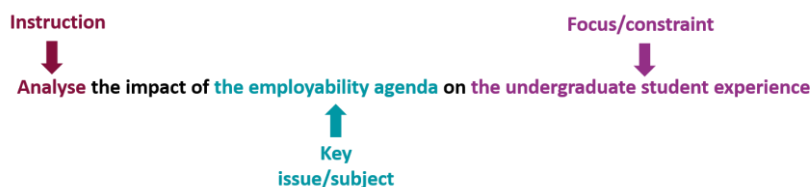
- it avoids being too personal – the text should focus on the research / subject itself.
- it ALWAYS AVOIDS addressing the reader directly with the second-person pronoun "you".
- it avoids use of the first-person pronouns "I" "We" "Us". (people = THEY . . . NOT "us")
- it avoids referring to yourself (*In my opinion... I think that... I like/dislike... I will argue that...*)

ACADEMIC WRITING IS planned and focused:

- it answers the question / task and demonstrates an understanding of the subject.

ACADEMIC WRITING IS NOT a place to ASK questions:

- it ANSWERS the Question / Prompt / Task → it should NOT ASK QUESTIONS.
- it **fulfills** a task (QUESTION or PROMPT) → it does not INTERPRET the task.
- a typical question / prompt / task has 3 parts:



- 1) **INSTRUCTION:** **analyse** means something different to **discuss** or **evaluate**. In academic writing these have very specific and unique meanings – a writer needs to make sure they are aware of this **BEFORE** writing.
- 2) **KEY ISSUE / SUBJECT:** this is **the MAIN IDEA** the writer should be writing about.
- 3) **FOCUS / CONSTRAINT:** while there may be a variety of approaches / perspectives – this is **the ONLY** approach / perspective the writer should use.

NOTE: In terms of the B2 English Exam (Academic Writing Section), the primary instruction words you will need to focus on (AND BE ABLE TO DO CORRECTLY) are:

"SUMMARIZE" = to give a concise account of the main principles or features of something.

"DESCRIBE" = to give a detailed account of something by reference to qualities, recognizable features, or characteristic marks.

"COMPARE/CONTRAST" = to describe the main points of similarity and difference between two or more things.

ACADEMIC WRITING IS structured:

- it is coherent, written in a logical order, and connects related points and ideas.

ACADEMIC WRITING IS NOT one long sentence or block of text.

AN ACADEMIC PAPER (in fact, all academic work) HAS THREE DISTINCT SECTIONS:

- **INTRODUCTION:** In the introduction, you need to grab the reader's attention and identify the thesis (MAIN IDEA) of the paper.
- **BODY:** This is the main part of the work and the paragraphs must be clearly written and be arranged in a logical order, such as chronologically or in order of importance.
- **CONCLUSION:** In the conclusion, you re-emphasize the thesis and summarize all the main points. The conclusion consists of one paragraph which shows the final conclusion to the reader.

PARAGRAPHS

An academic paper is made up of paragraphs (PLURAL):

- a paragraph is a series of sentences (PLURAL)
 - the sentences in a paragraph are organized and coherent (CLEAR)
 - the sentences in a paragraph are all related to a single topic
 - the sentences in a paragraph serve a function / purpose

Topic Sentences

A well-organized paragraph supports or develops a single controlling idea, which is expressed in a sentence called **the topic sentence**

- the **topic sentence** states the main idea of the paragraph
- the **topic sentence** not only names the **topic** of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two specific areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph
- the specific area is called the **controlling idea**

EXAMPLE: TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA
Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.

Supporting Sentences

The remaining sentences in a paragraph develop the topic sentence. **Supporting Sentences** are used to:

- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • EXPLAIN | • ELABORATE | • DESCRIBE | • GIVE REASONS |
| • DEFINE | • GIVE FACTS | • GIVE EXAMPLES | • GIVE QUOTES |

FUNCTION:

ELABORATION

ELABORATION

EVIDENCE

EXAMPLE

ELABORATION

EVIDENCE

EXAMPLE

EXPLANATION

CONCLUSION /
TRANSITION**SENTENCE:**

First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion.

Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes.

Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever.

For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago.

Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry and science.

For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications.

The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits.

Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside the spaceship.

In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty but also its utility.

Paragraph Structure

The model paragraph contains all the elements of a good paragraph.

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a **lustrous** beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago. Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside spaceships. In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility.

lustrous: very shiny

PRACTICE: Recognizing Topic & Supporting Sentences

[Page 3]

Read the following topic sentence:

TOPIC SENTENCE: *My best friend Naomi is one of the busiest people I know.*

WHAT is the TOPIC?

WHAT is the CONTROLLING IDEA?

For the sentences below (1 - 10):

Put a \checkmark next to the sentences that support the topic sentence.

Put an **X** next to the sentences that are not related to it (do not support the topic sentence).

- ___ 1) She wakes up early every morning to work at the convenience store next to the station.
- ___ 2) She has long black hair.
- ___ 3) Every day at five o'clock she baby-sits her little brother until her mother gets home from work.
- ___ 4) She goes to English conversation lessons several times a week.
- ___ 5) Most people like her because she is friendly.
- ___ 6) Her mother is very busy, too.
- ___ 7) She is a volunteer teaching Japanese to children who come from abroad.
- ___ 8) Naomi's boyfriend is busy, too.
- ___ 9) Last year she passed the FCE exam.
- ___ 10) She is active in her tennis club.

PRACTICE: Recognizing the Parts of a Paragraph

Read the TOPIC SENTENCE for the paragraph below, and then arrange the remaining sentences that follow so they are in the correct order by putting the number 1, 2, 3 on the line in front of each of the sentences (a - e).

There are two (2) sentences that DO NOT SUPPORT the topic – leave them blank or put an X on the line in front of those two (2) sentences.

Write **ONLY ONE NUMBER** for each line / sentence.

(Points are awarded for the correct numbers on the correct lines, and there is only one correct order)

TOPIC SENTENCE: *An automated teller machine (ATM) is a convenient miniature bank.*

- ___ a) Money is often defined as the coins or bills with their value on them that are used to buy things.
- ___ b) It enables customers to do several banking transactions twenty-four hours a day.
- ___ c) In addition, a customer can transfer funds between accounts or get a cash advance on a credit card.
- ___ d) An automat is a a restaurant where you buy food from boxes whose doors open when money is put in.
- ___ e) For example, a customer can use an ATM to deposit money and withdraw a limited amount of cash.

NOTE → on the B2 Exam, this part ("Recognizing the Parts of a Paragraph") will look similar to what you see here (except there will be 7 sentences – of which, you will only need 5).

PRACTICE 2: Recognizing Topic & Supporting Sentences

[Page 4]

Arrange the supporting sentences in the following paragraphs so that they are in the correct order.

TOPIC SENTENCE: *All around the world living in big cities creates serious problems for people.*

SUPPORTING SENTENCES:

- ___ a) To sum up, air pollution and traffic jams are two important problems that people living in big cities have.
- ___ b) The first problem is air pollution. For example, in Istanbul, many people have cars and cars are one reason why the air is polluted.
- ___ c) For this reason, many inhabitants waste their time in traffic, and they are negatively affected by this situation.
- ___ d) Secondly, traffic is an important problem for the people living in big cities.
- ___ e) There are now more and more cars on roads, and this causes traffic jams in many parts of the cities.

TOPIC SENTENCE: *Bicycles are popular today in many countries for three reasons.*

SUPPORTING SENTENCES:

- ___ a) Bikes are generally not expensive to buy, and they are quite cheap to fix.
- ___ b) In cities, many people prefer bikes to cars because unlike cars, with a bicycle, they never have to wait in traffic.
- ___ c) To illustrate, in Holland, people think riding a bicycle is a better way of keeping fit and staying healthy than other sports.
- ___ d) In brief, having a bicycle is beneficial for people for different reasons.
- ___ e) First, most of the people use bicycles to exercise.
- ___ f) Finally, they are suitable for city life.
- ___ g) The second reason is money.

TOPIC SENTENCE: *If you get angry easily and offend others, there are a number of techniques you can use to keep your anger under control.*

SUPPORTING SENTENCES:

- ___ a) A similar technique is to take three deep breaths as you consciously relax your muscles.
- ___ b) A good example of this is road rage—many people are hurt or killed each year by angry motorists.
- ___ c) There are some who believe that avoiding fatty foods and eating plenty of fruits and vegetables will help keep both your mind and body healthy.
- ___ d) These simple techniques for controlling anger allow you to relax and mentally step back for a few moments until you are calm and can think clearly again.
- ___ e) One effective way to deal with anger is to slowly count to ten before your anger explodes; this should give you enough time to calm down and not overreact.
- ___ f) A final technique for controlling anger is to think of a favorite place where you feel relaxed, such as a beach or forest, and imagine yourself there.

Step 1:

When writing a paragraph, it may be helpful to first write an outline that includes:

- the topic
- the controlling idea
- supporting information

EXAMPLE:

TOPIC	= smoking		
CONTROLLING IDEA	= health hazards		
SUPPORTING INFORMATION	= lung cancer	→	proven link
	other lung diseases	→	emphysema, bronchitis
	heart disease	→	risk factor
	passive smoking	→	effect on non-smokers

Step 2:

Write the Topic Sentence (which includes the Controlling Idea [smoking & health hazards]):

EXAMPLE:

'There are several serious health hazards linked to smoking.'

Step 3:

Next write a supporting sentence for each point. Use facts and/or examples to support your points:

lung cancer → proven link

'The relationship between smoking and cancer is well-known, so much so that the tobacco industry is required to label every pack of cigarettes with a warning.'

other lung diseases → emphysema, bronchitis

'Smoking has also been linked to other lung diseases such as emphysema and bronchitis. Evidence of this link has been demonstrated in recent court cases in the US, in which smokers have been awarded damages to be paid by certain tobacco manufacturers.'

heart disease → risk factor

'There are also studies which indicate that smokers have a greater risk of developing heart disease later in life.'

passive smoking → effect on non-smokers

'Furthermore, substantial research has shown that even passive smoking can have long term effects on a person's health. Many places around the world have acknowledged this by establishing public no smoking laws.'

Step 4:

Write a concluding sentence to sum up these ideas (and let the reader know that you are finished discussing this set of Controlling Ideas):

EXAMPLE:

'Clearly smoking is a dangerous habit and should be avoided.'

Step 5:

Combine all of these elements to write your paragraph:

Topic & Controlling Idea

Supporting Sentences

Concluding Sentence

'There are several serious health hazards linked to smoking. The relationship between smoking and cancer is well-known, so much so that the tobacco industry is required to label every pack of cigarettes with a warning. Smoking has also been linked to other lung diseases such as emphysema and bronchitis. Evidence of this link has been demonstrated in recent court cases in the US, in which smokers have been awarded damages to be paid by certain tobacco manufacturers. There are also studies which indicate that smokers have a greater risk of developing heart disease later in life. Furthermore, substantial research has shown that even passive smoking can have long term effects on a person's health. Many places around the world have acknowledged this by establishing public no smoking laws. Clearly smoking is a dangerous habit and should be avoided.'

Step 6:

Proofread your paragraph according to the following checklist:

- 1) Does the paragraph have a clear topic sentence that is related to the main idea of the paper you are writing?
- 2) Does the topic sentence have a clear controlling idea?
- 3) Does the controlling idea limit the topic to a reasonable amount of things to be discussed in one paragraph?
- 4) Does the paragraph include supporting sentences?
- 5) Is there a clear plan for the order of the body paragraphs (i.e., order of importance, etc.)?
- 6) Are the supporting sentences supported with examples, evidence, etc.?
- 7) Are there transitions (linking words / phrases) that connect the sentences (ideas, examples, etc.)?
- 8) Do the supporting sentences fully develop (prove) the topic of the paragraph?
- 9) Do the sentences make use of academic vocabulary (and grammatical structures)?
- 10) Does the paragraph include any information NOT connected to the Topic Sentence & Controlling Idea? If so – remove it.

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPHS

[Page 7]

The introductory paragraph of any paper, long or short, should start with a sentence that gets the interest of readers. In a typical essay / academic text, that first sentence leads into two or three other statements that provide details about the writer's subject or process. All of these sentences build up to the essay's thesis statement.

The introduction paragraph typically has the following:

- Attention-Getter (Lead-in) (1 sentence – 2 sentences maximum)
- Set Up for the Thesis (minimum: 2 – 3 sentences)
- Thesis Statement (Essay Map) (1 sentence)

Attention Getters & Lead-ins

To get a paper off to a great start, writers should try to have a first sentence that engages their reader. This first sentence should be broadly related to the topic of the essay.

Ways writers can begin:

- Paradoxical or Intriguing Statement
- Rhetorical Question
- Statement of the Problem
- Shocking Statement or Statistic
- Anecdote
- Proverb, Maxim, or Strong Statement

Set Up for a Thesis

After the attention getter or lead-in, writers need to gradually narrow the broad subject towards the thesis.

Sentences used for gradually narrowing can:

- provide **background** information
- **explain** underlying information
- **describe** the complexity of the issue
- introduce various **layers** of the subject
- help **transition** from these more broad ideas to the narrow thesis

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement manages to encapsulate an essay's main argument in a succinct, one-sentence comment. Beginner writers often times find it useful to create an essay map thesis, where the thesis briefly lists the areas that will be discussed in the essay.

A Thesis Statement:

- has a clearly stated **opinion** → but **does not directly announce** the opinion ("In this essay I will...")
- is **narrow** enough to write a focused essay → but also **broad** enough to write at least 3 body paragraphs
- is **clearly stated** in **specific** terms
- is **easily recognized** as the **main idea**
- is forceful and **direct**
- is **not softened** with useless / overused phrases ("in my opinion" or "I think")
- **can list** the 3 main points that will be made.

In the Introduction Paragraph NEVER EVER EVER. . .

- bluntly **announce** the essay's **intent** ("In this essay I will...")
- make **unreasonable** statements
- **apologize** for the material that is being written ("In my humble opinion...")
- go into a **detailed account** of the writing
- include **random information** that has nothing to do with the essay
- use an **encyclopedia or dictionary definition** ("According to Webster's...")
- **dilly-dally** (delay - hesitate) → get to it - move confidently into the essay.

PRACTICE: SAMPLE INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

Look at the sentences below (a - f) and put them in the correct order for an introduction paragraph. Write the number for each sentence (1 - 6) on the line in front of the letters.

- ___ a) If every US citizen had such a card, airlines could screen for terrorists more effectively than they do now and avoid procedures that single out individuals solely on the basis of race. [Thesis Statement]
- ___ b) While some airports began to target passengers based solely on their Middle Eastern origins, others instituted random searches instead. [Background – Explaining / Describing]
- ___ c) Now many experts in the government and in airport security are recommending the use of a national ID card or Safe Traveler Card. [Narrowing transition – ready to state thesis]
- ___ d) After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, the debate surrounding racial profiling in airports intensified. [Attention-Getter / Lead-in]
- ___ e) Many people believed that profiling was the best way to identify possible terrorists, but many others worried about violations of civil liberties. [Background – Explaining / Describing]
- ___ f) Neither of these techniques seems likely to eliminate terrorism. [Transition – beginning to set-up thesis]

PRACTICE – Recognizing the Parts of an Introduction

[Page 8]

Look at the following sentences for an introduction paragraph and put them in the correct order. Write the number for each sentence on the line in front of the letters.

Introduction Paragraph One:

- ___ a) One of the primary problems created by schools and faced by teenagers is the intense pressure to achieve and maintain exceptional grades.
- ___ b) The life of a teenager in modern America is not always pleasant.
- ___ c) Most of these problems center around school, which is not surprising considering that the teenager devotes an average of eight hours a day in school and school-related activities.
- ___ d) He or she is faced with a multitude of conflicts and problems, many of which seem almost impossible to overcome.

Introduction Paragraph Two:

- ___ a) After all, they think, if Mom and Dad can do it, it can't be that complicated.
- ___ b) Most teenagers, in fact, find that driving is a rather complex, tiring, and anxiety-producing activity that requires training and skill in order to do it smoothly and safely.
- ___ c) Most young teenagers are convinced that driving is little more than sitting in the driver's seat, turning the ignition, and going easily and simply wherever one chooses.
- ___ d) However, most teenagers are surprised and overwhelmed by the complexity of guiding a big box at fast speeds along narrow strips cluttered by other big boxes moving unpredictably at fast speeds along the same narrow strips.

Introduction Paragraph Three:

- ___ a) However, in others, the nuclear family is the norm, with only the parents and young children sharing the same house.
- ___ b) People in different cultures all over the world have different systems for family life.
- ___ c) In most cultures, people live in extended families, in which several generations share the same house.
- ___ d) If this new system becomes widespread, it could have enormous effects on American society.
- ___ e) On the positive side, living together might reduce the divorce rate in the United States; on the negative side, it might lead to the eventual disintegration of the traditional family unit altogether.
- ___ f) In the United States, some couples are experimenting with still another system of family life: living together without marriage.

What NOT to do:

DO NOT use slang, jargon or colloquialisms.

DO NOT use shortened verb forms (contractions), such as they're, isn't, can't.

DO NOT use *etc.*, *i.e.*, or *e.g.* (except within brackets)
"...they are not deadly, i.e., mental issues have a significant impact on life the lives of many people; e.g., low self-confidence, depression, etc."

DO NOT use common vocabulary, such as have got, a lot, nice, the other thing.

DO NOT use conversational opening phrases, such as *Well, you see, Yes..., Let's move on. Let's say...*

DO NOT write *"I think"* or *"In my opinion"*
"I think / In my opinion global warming will..."

DO NOT use personal pronouns e.g. *I, you, we, our* (unless specifically required), i.e. do not write:
"We think that you should be able to compete."

DO NOT write *"In this paper I will..."* OR
"The purpose of this essay is to..."

DO NOT use sweeping generalisations: e.g.,
"...everyone knows..." *"...X is the best..."*

DO NOT use bullet points or lists, unless it is in a report.

DO NOT make assumptions or give your opinion (unless specifically asked / or in the concluding paragraph).

DO NOT change your mind or repeat yourself.

DO NOT plagiarize.

DO NOT take for granted (assume) that the spell check on your computer is accurate or will spot all spelling mistakes (e.g., whether vs. weather).

DO NOT ask (direct) questions in the running text, that is, do not write, for instance:
"Can carbon emissions be reduced?"

DO NOT mix words and numbers unsystematically.

DO NOT put a comma before the word *"that."*
"Academic writing is something, that all students should master."

DO NOT use the words *"way"* and *"how"* together.
"It is the only way how to do it."

Do NOT use *"made up"* or NON-English words / phrases:
"...registrate..."
"...abolish the class..."
"...to have a collision in your schedule..."

What to do:

Use formal language.

Use the full verb form instead, e.g. they are, is not, and cannot.
 AND → it is CANNOT...**not** can not *

Use MEANING, FOR EXAMPLE or AND / OR.
"...they are not deadly, meaning mental issues have a significant impact on life the lives of many people; for example, low self-confidence and / or depression."

Make more formal vocabulary choices, e.g., have found, a great deal, attractive / advantageous, the other issue / problem / notion / idea / topic etc.

Leave out conversational phrases. Use appropriate connectors and introductory phrases.

Leave out *"I think"* or *"In my opinion"* USE: *"Global warming will..."* OR *"It is believed that global warming will..."*

Be non-personal, e.g.
"It should be possible for everyone to compete."

You are writing the paper and will clearly do something. There is no need to say you will do something – just do it! And it is NOT necessary to write *"In conclusion..."* This is an overused transition to the conclusion. The reader should know they are at the conclusion of your paper based on the content of the concluding paragraph / section.

State main ideas clearly and concisely in your own words in topic sentences. Use hedging.

Use complete sentences and link these into logical paragraphs.

Be objective.

Be clear and concise.

Provide references whenever you say something that is not your own.

Check spelling, grammar and punctuation.
 Proofread and use a dictionary.
 Ask somebody to proofread your text for you.

Convert questions into statements, for example:
"The possibility of carbon emissions being reduced is questionable."

(In general) Use words for numbers nine and below and numbers for 10 and above.

Learn proper punctuation and the correct use of relative Pronouns / relative clauses.

Use English NOT Czenlish.
"It is the only way to do it." "It is how it is done."

Use English NOT Czenlish.
"...register..."
"...cancel the class..."
"...to have a scheduling conflict..."

* Both *cannot* and *can not* are generally acceptable spellings, but **the first is much more usual**. You would ONLY use *can not* when the 'not' forms part of another construction such as 'not only'. For example: *"Roads can not only ruin the countryside, but also divide communities."* → Advice = ALWAYS use CANNOT

This will be different from the style of the language you hear and use in spoken academic contexts such as lectures, seminars and tutorials.

Look at the following extract from a student's essay on attitudes to science and how these might be changed. The tutor commented on the underlined sections of the essay. Match the sections (1 - 21) to the tutor's comments (a - m). Some comments refer to more than one section.

16 They're often shown as being socially isolated or even **17** mad! Another factor is the quality of science teaching in school. If a science teacher is interesting and enthusiastic, **18** he can have a **19** big impact on whether a student goes on to study science at college or university. Unfortunately, in my experience **20** not many science teachers are inspirational, although **21** the reader may have had a different experience.

- 1
- a) Avoid colloquial words and phrases (i.e. ones used in informal conversation rather than formal writing).
 - b) Avoid long expressions where there are shorter ones with the same meaning.
 - c) Use a one-word verb rather than a multi-word verb where possible.
 - d) Unless you are referring specifically to men or to women, use gender-neutral language.
 - e) Avoid referring to the reader as 'you' or 'the reader'.
 - f) Avoid contracted forms (e.g. use 'is not' rather than 'isn't').
 - g) Don't use 'like' instead of 'such as' when giving examples.
 - h) Don't use 'besides' to add another, stronger reason.
 - i) Avoid using questions to organise your writing.
 - j) Avoid using 'I' (think/believe etc.) when you express your opinion.
 - k) Use nominalisations where possible to express yourself more efficiently.
 - l) Don't use exclamation marks to show your surprise.
 - m) Use more appropriate negative forms ('few' rather than 'not many', 'little' rather than 'not much', 'no' rather than 'not any').

IMPERSONAL *IT*-CLAUSES: SAYING THAT SOMETHING IS IMPORTANT, INTERESTING, ETC.

In academic writing, we often use a sentence with an *it*-clause to draw the reader's attention to a point that we think is particularly important or interesting. The following structures (a - c) show the main ways of doing this.

- a it is + adjective + (to-infinitive) + that
- b it + modal + passive verb + that
- c it is + (other structures)

Match the example (1 - 6) to the structures (a - c).

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1) It should be noted that most snakes grow larger the longer they live. | <u> b </u> |
| 2) It is essential to recognise that there are individual differences between learners. | <u> </u> |
| 3) It is worth pointing out that these words can have multiple meanings. | <u> </u> |
| 4) It is noteworthy that in general well-managed and successful firms have very few problems with their labour force. | <u> </u> |
| 5) It is important to note that neither the Egyptian nor the Chinese written symbols are actually 'pictures' of a house or a river. | <u> </u> |
| 6) It must be emphasised that these conclusions are based on only limited data. | <u> </u> |

Add an *it*-clause to each of the following extracts.

- Choose a suitable *it*-clause from above (a, b or c)
- Decide the best place (1, 2 or 3) to insert the *it*-clause in each extract.

A **(1)** In 2007 it was estimated that nearly 6 million South Africans had HIV / AIDS, more than any other country. **(2)** This means that nearly one in six people in the world with HIV / AIDS was South African. **(3)** The other top five countries with the highest occurrence of HIV / AIDS are all neighbours of South Africa.

B As well as looking at short-term trends, **(1)** it is always important to look at the longer term. **(2)** For example, although unemployment was rising in the period covered in Table 3.1, **(3)** the number of people in work in September 1992 was 1.3 million higher than in March 1983.

NOTE: Research shows that in the written academic corpus the most common adjectives (phrases) used in the following structures are:

it is + adjective + to-infinitive

- 1) easy
- 2) important
- 3) reasonable
- 4) enough
- 5) possible
- 6) interesting
- 7) difficult
- 8) hard
- 9) impossible
- 10) likely
- 11) a good idea

it is + adjective + that

- 1) clear
- 2) possible
- 3) likely
- 4) unlikely
- 5) true
- 6) evident
- 7) a well-known fact
- 8) certain
- 9) essential

PRACTICE – “It” Clauses

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below (1 - 20) with ONE of the following phrases.

You may use each phrase ONLY ONCE.

A GOOD IDEA TO PUT ON / A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT / CERTAIN THAT / CLEAR THAT /
 DIFFICULT TO GUESS / EASY TO FIND / ENOUGH TO MELT / ESSENTIAL THAT / EVIDENT THAT /
 HARD TO KNOW / IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP / IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY / INTERESTING TO SEE /
 LIKELY THAT / LIKELY TO GET / POSSIBLE THAT / POSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND /
 REASONABLE TO IMPROVE / TRUE THAT / UNLIKELY THAT

- 1) It is _____ a lab coat.
- 2) When viewed at high magnification it is _____ the crystals are quite different.
- 3) It is _____ the two sides will be able to bridge their differences.
- 4) It is _____ excuses for failure.
- 5) It is _____ good study skills.
- 6) When his lips break into a smile, it is _____ any woman's heart.
- 7) Using the evidence available it is _____ quite a lot about how these people lived.
- 8) It is _____ all cats share many features of their behaviour, down to the tiniest detail.
- 9) Given this apparent potential it is _____ how the various manufacturers are coping with the current market expansion.
- 10) Nobody knows exactly who built the manor, but it is _____ an architect called John Sturges supplied the drawings.
- 11) It is _____ what will happen.
- 12) It is _____ there's an explanation for all this.
- 13) It is _____ cold in the laboratory.
- 14) It is _____ when a rat will get loose.
- 15) It is _____ smoking can cause lung cancer.
- 16) It is _____ the event goes well.
- 17) Without well-defined goals, it is _____ efforts will be misdirected.
- 18) The results show that it is _____ the technology by replacing the paper pulp with the Kieselguhr filter aid.
- 19) At this point in time, it is _____ whether she will make a full recovery.
- 20) It is _____ smoking is harmful to health.