

Academic Writing Skill

What is Academic Writing?

Academic writing refers to a particular style of expression. Characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective, clear focus on the issue or topic rather than the author's opinion, and precise word choice. Writers employing the formal academic style avoid [jargon](#), slang, and abbreviations.

Academic writing is formal writing. Many novice writers have trouble telling informal writing apart from formal writing. They resort to informal writing, since it's easier and more familiar. Characteristics of informal writing include the use of colloquialisms and jargon, writing in the first person or making "I" statements, making direct personal statements, and imprecise word choices.

Just as you probably wouldn't wear shorts and flip-flops to a wedding, there's a time and a place for informal writing. The most informal writing imaginable is the text message, full of abbreviations such as "R U here?" to convey quick questions and responses. In comparison, the most formal writing of all can be found in legal documents.

Informal writing is fine for diary entries, blogs, personal writing, letters or emails to friends. However, writers working on papers for school, college application essays, scientific papers, research papers, conference presentations, and business proposals generally employ a more formal style akin to donning a suit or dress to attend a wedding.

Here are examples of informal and formal writing.

Informal writing: I think he's a loser.

Formal writing: Macbeth's horrific choices cause him to lose everything he holds dear: children, wife, friends, crown and king.

In this example, the first statement is informal. The writer speaks in the first person, using the word "I", and states an opinion. The author employs the slang term "loser", which is inappropriate in a formal context. He also uses the contraction "he's". If this were in the middle of a paragraph, it may be easier to understand to whom the author is referring. Taken as a simple statement, however, it's impossible to know whether the writer thinks his best friend, his dog, or a rock star is a loser!

The second example uses an academic, formal style typical of what professors might expect at the college level. Written in the third-person, the sentence omits references to the writer and focuses on the issue. Strong, specific adjectives like "horrific" convey the author's view clearly without resorting to slang. The use of the colon—sometimes discouraged by professors as an [antiquated](#) punctuation mark, but still used in formal documents—creates a strong, formal feel when properly used here to introduce a list.

Academic Writing Skills

Writers seeking to improve their academic writing skills should focus their efforts on three key areas:

1. **Strong writing:** Thinking precedes writing. Good writers spend time distilling information from their sources and reviewing major points before creating their work. Writing detailed outlines helps many authors organize their thoughts. Strong academic writing begins with solid planning.

2. **Excellent grammar:** Learn the major and minor points of grammar. Spend time practicing writing and seek detailed feedback from teachers, professors or writers you respect. English grammar can be detailed and complex, but strong writers command the major points after many years of study and practice. Investing in a good writing reference, such as Strunk and White's book, *The Elements of Style*, or referring to YourDictionary can provide advice on the more troublesome points of grammar. Proper punctuation use and good proofreading skills improve academic writing as well.

3. **Consistent stylistic approach:** Whether your school or employer requires use of the MLA, APA or Chicago Manual of Style, choose one style and stick to it. Each of these style sheets provide guidance on how to write out numbers, references, citations, and more. All are available at your local bookseller in hard copy or online. The MLA is commonly used in English classes, while APA is for psychology and science. Chicago Manual of Style is often the choice in the workplace.

本文引用地址: <http://www.yourdictionary.com/dictionary-articles/academic-writing-skills.html>