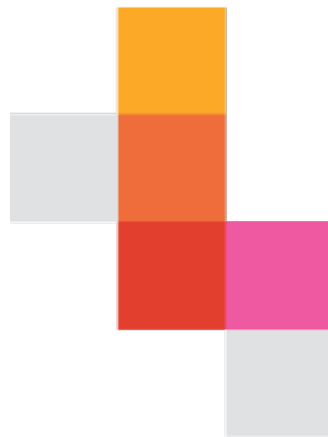


Academic Writing

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Academic writing

1. Academic Writing – Before you start

1.1 What is your aim?

- What have you been asked to do? Be clear about the purpose of the writing task.
- Check with your tutor if you are not sure.
- Follow the instructions.
- See [2 Getting Ready to Write](#) for more about interpreting assignment questions.

1.2 Who is your audience?

Your marker is your most important reader. Although the marker may know more about the subject than you, it's still important not to leave out any basic or essential information.

- Show the marker that *you* have a thorough knowledge of the material and the subject.
- Present the information in an academic style that meets the assignment criteria.
- Imagine you are writing this to teach someone about the topic. Be specific and clear.
- See [Academic writing: paragraph level \(section 4. 1\)](#) and [Academic writing: sentence level \(section 4. 2\)](#) for more information on how to write with greater clarity.

1.3 What is academic tone and how to get it?

Tone affects how the reader responds. It's the way the level and style of writing makes the reader feel. For example, an email to a friend has a casual tone; a letter to the bank has a formal tone. An academic tone is formal, objective and factual. ([See 3. 4. 3 Informal vs. formal language](#))

Setting the right tone depends on:

- The nature and purpose of the task.
- The lecturer's requirements.
- The assignment type – e.g. case study, report, reflective journal, literature review. Each assignment type has different expectations of structure and suitable language use.
- The social distance between you and your reader. Do you need a personal or impersonal tone, an informal or formal writing style?
- Set the tone with writing that is factual, objective and supported by evidence.

1.4 A checklist of academic writing features

- **Linear:** One central argument with all parts combining to support it.
- **Informative:** The aim is to provide information not entertainment.



- **Complex:** Written using more complex grammar, vocabulary and structures.
- **Formal:** Not a personal tone so avoid using colloquial words and expressions.
- **Precise:** Facts and figures used must be correct.
- **Objective:** Emphasis on information and arguments not on you (the writer). Academic writing focuses on nouns (and adjectives), rather than verbs (and adverbs). (See **'Nominalization' in 3. 4. 3 Informal vs. formal language**)
- **Explicit:** Show the reader how the different parts of the text are related by the using signalling or transition words.
- **Accurate:** Know the meanings of words, particularly subject specific words and use them accurately.
- **Qualification:** Also called 'hedging.' You might need to qualify your stance or the strength of your claims. Perhaps there is no research available or the research is contradictory. Using words like occasionally, a few, can be, might be, are a way to qualify generalisations.
- **Responsibility:** You are responsible for proving what you say with evidence and for a complete understanding of the sources you use.

For more information on the various assignment types, see **Academic Writing 2 - Assignment types**.

Adapted from the following sources:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

Learning Development, University of Wollongong 2000, *Academic Writing*, viewed 10 June 2012, <<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/main.html>>.

Gillett, Andy, 2013, *Features of Academic Writing*, Using English for Academic Purposes, viewed 10 June 2012, <<http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/featfram.htm>>.

2. Getting Ready to Write

The three stages of writing – Prepare → Research → Write

I. Prepare	II. Research	III. Write
Analyse the Question	Read Broadly ▼ Take an initial Tentative Position ▼ Read Narrowly ▼ Adopt position	Plan ▼ Draft ▼ More research ▼ Refine position ▼ Re-position ▼ Redraft ▼ Final Edit

2. 1 Prepare

2. 1. 1 What is the assignment asking you to do?

- What kind of assignment is it? (E.g. essay, research report, case study, reflective journal, law case notes)
- What do I have to do? Look for the words that direct you e.g. discuss, summarise, critically analyse, compare.

Instruction Words

Instruction Words	
Account for	To give reasons for; to explain why something happens
Analyse	To examine in very close detail; to identify important points and major features.
Argue	To present the case for and/or against a particular proposition
Assess	To weigh something up and to consider how valuable it may be.
Comment	To identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read or heard in lectures. Avoid purely personal opinion.
Compare	To show how two or more things are similar; to indicate the relevance or consequences of these similarities.
Contrast	To set two or more items or arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences; to indicate whether the differences are significant. If appropriate, give reasons why one item or argument may be preferable.
Critically evaluate	To weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable.
Critique	To give your judgment about the merit of theories or opinions about the truth of facts, and back your judgment by a discussing the evidence. Include the good and bad points look at any implications.
Define	To give the exact meaning of; where relevant, to show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.
Describe	To give the main characteristics or features of something, or to outline the main events.
Discuss	To write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); to give arguments for and against; to consider the implications of.
Distinguish	To bring out the differences between two items.
Enumerate	To list or specify and describe.
Evaluate	Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be cases to be made both for and against.
Examine	To look at a subject in depth taking note of the detail and if appropriate, consider the implications.
Explain	To clearly express why something happens, or why something is the way it is.
Explore	To examine thoroughly from different viewpoints.
Illustrate	To make something very clear and explicit, by providing examples or evidence.
Interpret	To give the meaning and relevance of information presented.
Justify	To give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why decisions or conclusions were made, considering objections that others might make.
Narrate	To concentrate on saying what happened, telling it as a story.
Outline	To give only the main points, showing the main structure.
Prove	To demonstrate truth or falsity by presenting evidence.
Relate	To show similarities and connections between two or more things.
Review	To make a survey of, examining the subject critically.



State	To give the main features, in very clear English (almost like a simple list but written in full sentences).
Summaries	To give a concise account of the main points only, omitting details or examples.
To what extent	To consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true. (The answer is usually somewhere between 'completely' and 'not at all'.)
Trace	To follow the order of different stages in an event or process.
Verify	To check out and report on the accuracy of something.

Adapted from the following source:

Griffith University 2011, *Directive Words*, viewed 20 June 2012,

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/320006/directive-words.pdf>.

- Analyse the task for keywords. Keywords are the words that identify the topic or issue. You'll use keywords when you research for information.
- What is the topic? Can you explain it in one statement?
- Ask yourself questions about the topic. This helps you analyse the topic and start problem solving.
- Test that you understand the question by rewriting it in your own words.

2. 2. 2 Take a position

- Once you have an overall understanding of the question, you should take a position. It can be a tentative position; you might change your mind as you find out more about the topic. With a position on the issue you can focus your research on more detailed texts.

2. 1. 3 Break the question down into meaningful pieces

- When you break down the assignment question into a series of questions, it helps you to work out the content you will need for each section. You can then decide what you need to research and read.

Example:

In recent years, many New Zealand tourist operators have been using the "eco" label to market their ventures, claiming responsible environmental and conservation practices. However, there is some argument over whether such claims can be justified. Discuss the current debate involving New Zealand's ecotourism industry. What role, if any, should government play in respect to ecotourism? Is there a role for the tourism industry itself.

- **Instruction word/s** – "Discuss"
- **Focus** – Claims made by ecotourism operators. Counter claims by opponents. Two sides to the debate – whose side does the evidence support? Should the government play a role? Should the tourism industry be involved?
- **Range & boundaries** – Ecotourism. New Zealand. Central government? Local government? Regional councils? Tourism industry.

Source:

Hunter, Carol, 2009, *Planning and Writing University Assignments*, The Student Learning Centre University of Otago, viewed 20 June 2012, <www.otago.ac.nz/slc>.

2. 1. 4 Discuss your interpretation of the question.

- Talk to your classmates and test your understanding of the task with them.
- Check vocabulary, facts and concepts if you need to.
- Ask your lecturer/tutor if you're still not clear.

2. 1. 5 Plan

- Use your assessment criteria as a checklist. What are the marks for each part? The breakdown of marks tells you how much time to spend on, and how much to write on, each part of the question. A checklist also reminds you not to leave out any parts of the question.

2. 2 Reading for research

2. 2. 1. What is Academic Reading

- Sometimes called Critical Reading, this type of reading actively critiques the ideas and arguments in the text.
- When you read an academic text, you need to think about your response to it. This is more than an "I agree" or "I don't agree" response. As you develop a better understanding of the subject and issues you gain the confidence to identify academic and rational reasons for your response
- Read the arguments, weigh the evidence, make conclusions.
- There are two types of reading:
 - Broad – Gives you an overview of the topic. Your lecture notes, subject learning guide, introductory and general texts are an introduction to the topic. Keep the assignment question in mind while you read and think about your response. Start to think about your position.
 - Narrow - Reading narrowly helps to confirm your initial, maybe tentative, position. When you start your research, you'll be looking for texts that provide more detail about the issues you have identified as important.

2. 2. 2 A reading checklist

- What is the purpose of reading?
- What is the topic?
- What do you already know about it?
- Who is this text written for – academic, general? Is it appropriate?
- How is it relevant?



- Check publication details – who wrote it? Where is it published? When?
- Then, read the abstract or executive summary.
- Skim introduction and conclusion, heading and topic sentences, noting sections, tables, graphics and references.

2. 2. 3 Read actively – ask questions

- How is the material presented?
- Is a particular bias or agenda present?
- Is evidence/argument presented convincingly?
- Is the language emotive or logical?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why?
- How does this text compare with others you have read on the topic?

2. 2. 4 Why take notes?

- Highlighting parts of the text and making notes helps you to identify the important points. This is how you make sense of the text and remember those points.
- When taking notes it's important to include the page references.
- Note the main ideas and stages of the argument.
- Use graphics to link ideas – tables, arrows, mind maps, whatever works for you.
- Relate any new ideas to what you already know.
- Be active – engage, question, dispute what you are reading.

2. 2. 5 After Reading – put it all together

- Check through your notes.
- Recheck meaning of words and concepts.
- Highlight the most important points and main ideas.
- As you go through your notes, add any new ideas and connections that you identify.
- Confirm your position. Having read narrowly and researched, you should be clear about your opinion. Making your case will keep your writing focused and coherent.

Adapted from the following source:

Forman, R. n.d., *Note-making and critical thinking*, UTS: ELSSA Centre, Sydney.



3. Writing

3.1 What is academic writing?

It is the style of writing that investigates the state of an issue and presents your position based on the evidence of your research. Academic, or critical, writing is the way you take part in the academic debate. You weigh up the evidence and arguments of others, and contribute your own.

3.1.1 What are the main features of academic writing?

- It is writing that displays your confident evaluation of the results of your research. It proves you have tested the evidence and arguments rather than just accepted them.
- It is balanced writing that gives valid reasons why the ideas of others may be accepted, dismissed, or treated with caution.
- In this style of writing your voice must be clear. You present the evidence and the argument that has led you to your conclusion.
- You need to demonstrate critical thinking skills and critical analysis
- Critical writing means you also recognise the limits of your evidence, argument, and conclusion.
- The use of grammar and vocabulary creates a formal style.
- You need to use references to support your ideas.

3.1.2 How will I write critically?

- By considering the quality of the evidence and arguments from all of the reading you've done.
- By identifying the key positive and negative aspects and commenting on them.
- By deciding how relevant and useful they are to your argument.

3.2 Why plan?

- A plan provides an overview of what your assignment will cover, it guides you along the way, and helps make sure that nothing is left out.
- Always keep in mind the original assignment task. Keep referring back to it and check that your arguments/examples are relevant to it.
- Map out a plan by organising your argument and evidence.
- Establish connections between your points.
- Experiment to find the plan/map that works for you. For example:
 - A list of headings and sub-headings
 - [Concept Map](#)
 - Bubble Diagrams
 - Brainstorming
 - Making Lists



- Note Cards
- Flow Diagrams

3. 3 What is the structure of an essay?

3. 3. 1 Introduction

Your introduction is your chance to create a good first impression on your reader and tell them what your paper is going to be about. It's a broad statement of your topic and your argument. It might not be the first thing you write. It may be easier to write your introduction after your first draft when you know and understand your topic better. Your introduction is usually between 10-20% the length of your paper.

An introduction contains three elements – a thesis statement, scope, structure.

Sample Essay

- **Thesis statement:**
 - A thesis statement is the specific claim you make in response to the assignment question. Your essay and everything in it supports this claim.
 - A strong thesis answers the question with a summary of your position and argument. It states the most important points and may modify or reject an opposing position. It summarises the organisation of your paper.
 - The thesis statement is usually at the end of the introduction, but it can sometimes be placed at the beginning. Don't put it in the middle of the introduction.

Adapted from the following source:

Dartmouth College 2005, *Developing your thesis*, accessed 12 July 2012, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/develop.shtml>.

Example Introduction:

General Statement ❶+❷; Thesis Statement ❸; Structure ❹

❶ It can be said that a growing trend of overconsumption, particularly in Western industrialised nations is rising considerably. This phenomena extends to a wide range of goods and products which at one time were built to be repaired and reused, but now deemed too expensive to do so, are simply tossed aside to make way for a brand new version of themselves. Also, ❷ it can be said that in these same developed nations especially, individuals consume and purchase far too many products, which are all too quickly consumed and not re-used, repaired nor recycled and after their usefulness has passed, are simply discarded or sent to landfill refuse sites. ❸ The overconsumption of goods and products therefore is seen as one of many common problems arising in the 21st Century and will continue to be ever more problematic until action is taken. As populations rise and become more affluent and developed, the consumption of goods and natural resources generally tend to grow exponentially and in many cases unsustainably leading to serious consequences. ❹ This essay will therefore ...

- **Scope** makes a general statement about the issue, topic or area under discussion.
- **Structure** sets out the main structure of the assignment.
- Be brief but include all your main ideas.

3. 3. 2 Body

- The body of the essay is where you use your evidence and examples to develop your argument.
- This is where you show the evidence of your research and thinking, along with appropriate citations.
- The bulk of the assignment marks come from the body of the assignment.
- You will be assessed on the development of your ideas, the relevance of your information, and your discussion of the information.
- If the assignment question has more than one part, structure the body into sections that deal with each part of the assignment question.
- Each part of your argument should be introduced with a topic sentence, followed by supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. ([See 4.2 Academic writing – sentence level](#))
- Your research should be carefully and correctly referenced, both in-text and a complete bibliography.

3. 3. 3 Conclusion

Your conclusion is a review of the assignment.

- Sum up your arguments.
- Make reference to the key terms of the assignment question.
- Restate and confirm your thesis.
- You might suggest recommendations, or point out the significance or implications that follow from your conclusion.
- There should be no new information in the conclusion.
- If you have added something not mentioned in the body, check that it is relevant. If so, include it as a paragraph in the body.

3. 3. 4 Reference list:

- This list is proof that you have researched the area.
- It shows your ideas are supported by other academic research.
- Makes clear what ideas and information are yours and what are other peoples.
- Observes copyright and avoids accusations of plagiarism by acknowledging and crediting the work of others.



- Make sure that you understand and use the referencing style approved by your faculty. At UTS this is the **Harvard UTS style** except for Teacher Education (APA) and Law (AGLC)
- Only include references that you have used in your assignment (i.e. those that you have cited in your assignment).

Adapted from the following source:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

3. 4 Drafting and Redrafting

3. 4. 1 Writing the first draft

- Using your plan, start writing the first draft.
- Write your first draft early!
- Be prepared to redraft the essay a few times as you discover areas that need more research, reading or evidence. As you redraft you can improve the academic language.
- Write up separate points.
- Structure your writing into paragraphs.
- Update your outline plan linking the sections.
- Leave it for 24 hours – then come back to it.

3. 4. 2 Editing

Editing gives the final polish to your writing. An unedited assignment is an easy way to *lose* marks.

- After you have completed the final draft, leave it for at least a day before you do the final editing. You will pick up errors more easily when you read it again after a break.
- Check the structure. Do you have an introduction-body-conclusion structure? Do the ideas flow logically? Is the writing coherent?
- Check your grammar and punctuation. Read it aloud. You can *hear* when the grammar is wrong. Check in **Grammarly**.
- Check the technical parts of the essay: presentation (font, spacing, paragraphs, spelling), in-text referencing and reference list.
- Re-read > edit > change > improve.
- If you can get a fresh pair of eyes to read it over – ask a friend, or book an individual consultation session at the **HELPS Centre**.

Adapted from the following sources:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

Learning Development, University of Wollongong 2000, *Essay writing: editing the final draft*, viewed 10 June 2000, <<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/essay/4aiv.html>>



3. 4. 3 Informal vs. formal language

Using formal language is an essential feature of academic writing. When you are editing your work, check for the use of informal language and use these examples to find better ways to express your ideas.

Informal Speaking Vocabulary	Academic Writing Vocabulary	What is the difference?
a lot of good/bad go up/go down/stay the same	a considerable amount; beneficial/favourable; increase/decrease/stabilize	More formal, doesn't use colloquial language
Retirement is something most of us must face sooner or later.	Retirement is inevitable.	
Illness Food Gadgets	Respiratory infection Traditional Italian cuisine Portable electronic devices	More specific
can't doesn't won't	cannot does not will not	Use full forms rather than contractions
Researchers looked at the way strain builds up around a geological fault.	Researchers examined the way strain intensifies around a geological fault.	Avoids phrasal verbs
It caused a really big reaction	It caused a significant reaction. (Or considerable/dramatic /explosive)	Avoids adverbs such as 'really', 'very', 'just'.
Everybody needs his own copy.	Everybody needs his or her own copy or Everybody needs their own copy	Gender inclusive
Informal Speaking Style	Academic Writing Style	What is the difference?
There is no way that the design concept can be implemented within the budget	It seems unlikely that the design concept can be implemented within the budget	Use a more cautious tone . How cautious depends on the level of certainty provided by your evidence.
Everybody knows that we have had a good year. You can see from the graph that sales have gone up significantly over the quarter.	It is generally accepted that this year has been favourable with respect to profit margins. As can be seen from the graph, sales have increased significantly over the quarter.	Academic writing is impersonal, so avoid using personal pronouns .
It is my belief that ... I am sure that ..	It can be concluded that ... In light of the evidence, ... It can be argued that ... It is evident from the data that ...	Use 3rd person or 'it' constructions or refer to the evidence.

Informal Speaking Sentence Structure	Academic Writing Sentence Structure	What is the difference?
<p>The situation deteriorated. It was because people did not communicate well with each other. The issues were eventually addressed, but it was too late. Then the project had to be cancelled.</p> <p>Toxic chemicals are handled carefully in industrial environments.</p>	<p>In spite of the belated attempts to address the problem, poor communication led to an irreversible deterioration of the situation.</p> <p>Careful handling of toxic chemicals in industrial environments, such as nuclear power plants and chemical plants, is a necessary safety measure.</p>	<p>In the Academic Writing example, the 'people' have been removed. This was done by turning the verb <i>deteriorated</i> into a noun – <i>deterioration</i>.</p> <p>Turning verbs into noun is a common feature of academic writing; it is called nominalization. It's a useful way to turn actions into ideas. That allows you to leave out the people and create a more impersonal tone.</p> <p>Nominalization gives you the chance to say more about a concept. The whole sentence can be turned into a noun group, which can then be linked to another idea. This is one of the skills in making complex sentences. (See Academic Writing 3 – 5.1 Building Sentences)</p>
<p>In conclusion, in this essay I have argued that multiculturalism is good for economic development.</p>	<p>In conclusion, in this essay it is argued that multiculturalism is beneficial for economic development.</p> <p>Even better: The argument that multiculturalism is beneficial for economic development has focused on (a list of the essay's main arguments).</p>	<p>Information is organized so that focus is on the argument (through use of nominalization).</p>
<p>Most of the eye tissue is transparent. Consequently, the frequency and focus of the laser beam can be adjusted.</p>	<p>Because most of the eye tissue is transparent, the frequency and focus of the laser beam can be adjusted.</p>	<p>Instead of two short sentences, use more complex sentence structures</p>
<p>Nurses must take into consideration allergies, medication, medical conditions and so on.</p>	<p>Nurses must take into consideration allergies, medication and medical conditions.</p>	<p>Avoids run-on expressions such as 'and so forth'; 'and so on' or 'etc'.</p>
<p>What is a team? A team can be one person but will usually end up including many more.</p>	<p>A team can include one person but usually involves many more.</p>	<p>Avoid rhetorical questions (a question for which no answer is expected).</p>



Informal Speaking - Expressing Opinion	Academic Writing – Expressing Opinion with evidence to support it	What is the difference?
<p>Prescribing anti-psychotic drugs to patients suffering from post-operative dementia is harmful.</p>	<p>The fact that prescribing anti-psychotic drugs to patients suffering from post-operative dementia care is harmful has been supported by Matheson (2007).</p> <p>Watkins** study indicated that recovery rates were 20% faster for patients given daily therapy in the form of specially designed mental exercises. (2010)</p> <p>*Can you find other authors and compare what they say about this issue? Do you think the ideas of the authors are valid?</p>	<p>Support your statements with evidence from readings, and cite them using the appropriate referencing guide.</p> <p>Synthesis ideas from a range of authors and makes critical judgements about them</p>

3. 4. 4 Active and passive sentences

A characteristic of academic writing is the use of passive sentence construction.

Active sentence	Passive sentence
<p>Active sentences focus on people (also known as actors or agents) doing things. The subject of the sentence doing something (as described by the verb).</p> <p>In the following example the University is the actor/agent.</p> <p>e.g. The University (subject) conducted (verb) the study in 2008.</p> <p>If the university conducting the study is the most important bit of information then having it first in the sentence draws attention to it.</p> <p>The active voice is the way we usually learn to construct sentences in English; it has the advantage of being clear and direct.</p>	<p>Passive sentences focus on the things being done, not on who is doing them.</p> <p>e.g. The study was conducted (verb) by the university in 2008.</p> <p>If the study itself is the most important bit of information then a passive voice puts it first.</p> <p>In situations where you want to be less direct and more tactful, use the passive voice.</p> <p>Using the passive voice also allows you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct the audience to focus on the information or argument being presented, and not on the writer or speaker. - omit any mention of the actor or agent where it is unimportant or unknown - place certain material at the end of the clause so that it may receive the emphasis of final position.

3. 4. 5 Reporting Verbs

Reporting verbs are the way you tell your reader **your opinion** about the research you are citing. You can report your belief that – the literature is **correct**, the literature is **incorrect** or take a **neutral** attitude (i.e., neither correct nor incorrect).

Student's attitude towards the literature being cited:	Correct	Neutral		Incorrect
The verbs are usually in 3rd person singular or plural simple present tense form. E.g. Brown (2004) explains ... Smith and Bull	acknowledges defines demonstrates explains identifies observes outlines shows throws light on	adds argues claims clarifies concludes describes expresses feels finds	indicates informs presents proposes remarks reminds reports states uses	confuses disregard ignores

3. 4. 6 Tense

Reports, essays and literature reviews tend to be written in the **present tense**, especially in the introductory sections. For example:

- This report analyses the...
- This literature review provides an overview and critical analysis of...
- Evidence, therefore, indicates that...

If you did practical research, then write the methodology, results and conclusions in the **past tense**:

- The equipment was calibrated prior to the experiment.
- Tension was applied to the bar and at x force it snapped.
- The results were analysed by...

3. 4. 7 Voice

Academic writing has an objective tone. A way of achieving this is to write in an impersonal voice. In [Section 3. 4. 4](#) you saw the way passive sentence structure removed the actor and focused on the information. When you do need to refer to an actor in your sentences use the 3rd person point of view to maintain an objective voice.

First Person	Becomes third person
I argue that...	This essay argues that...
We researched the issue of...	The group researched the issue...
I used semi structured interviews as my methodology	The chosen methodology was semi structured interviews...*
After this I will analyse topic x	Subsequently, topic x will be analysed...*
I found that...	It was found that...*
We thought the results were...	The results appeared to be...
Second person ...	becomes third person ...
You can read further about this in Further discussion of this topic is found the work of Smith and Jones (2010).	Further discussion of this topic is found in the work of Smith and Jones (2010).
You may find it difficult to replicate this experiment	Replication of this experiment may be difficult
Your reading will be more effective if you have a study plan.	Use of a study plan will improve the effectiveness of one's reading.

*A combination of 3rd person and passive sentence structure are key features of academic writing.

Adapted from the following source:

Griffith University 2011, *Writing in the third person*, viewed 20 June 2012,

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/320179/writing-in-the-third-person.pdf>.

3. 5 Writing in your own words

Putting the results of your research, your reading and your evidence into your own words whilst **clearly acknowledging your sources** is the key to avoiding plagiarism. There are a number of ways to include your research into your writing and they serve different purposes.

3. 5. 1 Synthesising

- A synthesis draws on two or more sources. In writing a synthesis, you draw out the **relationships between sources**. A synthesis is a combination, usually a shortened version, of several texts made into one. It contains the important points in the text and is written in your own words.
- [Synthesising Exercise \(UNE\)](#)

3. 5. 2 Summarising

- A summary is a **short** and **concise** statement - written in your own words - of the main points, ideas, concepts, facts or statements of another text. (It is different to a paraphrase, which is generally of a similar length to the original text.)
- Always document the sources you summarise.



- A summary contains the general idea or main points rather than a lot of details.
- It can be from a single source, or a collection of related sources, and gives a reader background information to help them understand the topic.
- A good summary highlights only those facts, ideas, opinions, etc., that are useful for your topic. It can support or contradict your argument but don't distract your reader with irrelevant details.
- Be accurate. Understand the information in your source material. If you misread the source you will misrepresent their point of view, ideas, opinions or position.
- Be objective. Do *not* confuse the reader by mixing your opinion with the information from the original source material.
- Express your opinions in comments framing your summary, not in the summary.
- Be concise – make your summary as brief as possible.

3. 5. 3 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing puts the ideas of others into your own words. It restates the ideas in the original source and includes the same information/details. As long as you acknowledge your source it is NOT plagiarism.

Why paraphrase instead of quote?

- It is more effective because the essay flows when you use your own words.
- It helps resolve the problem of over-quoting.
- The process of paraphrasing assists you in gaining a fuller understanding of the original.

Steps to paraphrasing sentences/paragraphs effectively:

- **Step 1:** Before you begin, it is essential that you fully understand the meaning of the original text. Underline any words that can be substituted with a synonym.
- **Step 2:** Make notes of the main idea/concept of the original. Note the key words/terms and not complete sentences. This will help you use your own words later.
- **Step 3:** Write the bibliographical details, the subject and a few comments next to your notes to remind you how you intend to use this material later.
- **Step 4:** Write from your notes not from the original text. Do not just substitute words; you must change the structure of the paragraph without changing the meaning and the attitude taken in the original. Remember to cite the original source.
- **Step 5:** Use quotation marks for any terms or phrases that you have used *exactly* as they appear in the original source.
- **Step 6:** Check your paraphrase with the original make sure it expresses the same ideas and attitude that are expressed in the original.
- **Step 7:** Do not include your own opinion or additional comments as this changes the meaning of the original and results in your ideas being wrongly attributed to the author. Your ideas and opinions can be expressed by **your choice of reporting verb (Section 3. 4. 5)**.



Example:

Compare the original text and the two paraphrases of it.

Original Text	Paraphrase – unacceptable	Paraphrase - acceptable
<p>The development of successful marketing strategies depends to a large extent on the planner's ability to segment markets. Unfortunately, this is not a simple process. Segmenting usually requires considerable management judgment and skill. Those marketers who have the necessary judgment and skill will have a real advantage over their competitors in finding profitable opportunities. (McCarthy, Perreault & McGuiggan 2000, p. 411)</p>	<p>Successful developing of marketing strategies is dependent to a great extent on the ability of the planner to segment markets. However, this process is difficult. Segmenting usually requires significant management judgment and skill. Only marketers who have the necessary judgment and skill will have a true advantage over their competitors in obtaining profitable opportunities (McCarthy, Perreault & McGuiggan 2000).</p> <p>This example follows the sentence structure of the original too closely and simply substitutes some of the words with synonyms.</p>	<p>According to McCarthy, Perreault and McGuiggan (2000), the planner's level of competence in the complex procedure of the segmentation of markets is a deciding factor in the success of market strategy development. Thus, high levels of management assessment and aptitude are necessary for marketers to truly gain a competitive advantage in procuring lucrative opportunities.</p> <p>The sentence structure has been changed and words have been substituted</p>

Sources:

The Writing Lab, Purdue University 2010, *Paraphrase: write it in your own words*, viewed 12 June 2012, <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/1/>>.

Learning Lab, RMIT University, Online tutorial: paraphrase, viewed 5 February 2013, <<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/paraphrasing-tutorial>>.

http://students.acu.edu.au/office_of_student_success/academic_skills_unit_asu/academic_refere nci ng/reporting_verbs/

McCarthy, E. J., Perreault, W. D. Jr & McGuiggan, R. L. 2000, *Learning aid to accompany basic marketing*, 2nd edn, McGraw-Hill, Sydney.

3. 5. 4 Quoting

Your assignment will include important ideas, writings and discoveries of experts in your field of study. Always acknowledge these contributions by referencing. You introduce other people's views into your work and name them in the text for a variety of reasons. For example:

- When you want to use an author as an **authoritative** voice.



- To introduce an author's position you may wish to **discuss**.
- To provide **evidence** for your own writing.
- To make a clear **distinction between the views of different authors**
- To make a clear **distinction between an author's views and your own**.
- When you **directly quote** an author you must **include the page number** in your reference.
- If the quote is **short** (under 30 words) you include it into the text of the paragraph between quotation marks. ""
- If the quote is longer, then put it into an **indented paragraph**.

3. 5. 5 Introductory Phrases

Use introductory phrases to tell the reader what the author you are referencing thinks or does in their text. Consider using the following after you have given the author's name (and the year or notation)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • X states that ... | • X comments that ... |
| • X claims that ... | • X takes the view that ... |
| • X asserts that ... | • X observes that ... |
| • X agrees that ... | • X believes that ... |
| • X strongly argues that ... | • X contends that ... |
| • X comments that ... | • X concludes that ... |
| • X suggests that ... | • X proposes that ... |
| • X argues that ... | • X concedes that ... |
| • X says that ... | • X maintains that |

4. Checklist for Writing & Editing Assignments

Use this checklist when you are redrafting and editing your assignment. Editing at the structural level and the sentence level can improve your marks by producing an essay that has a logical structure and flow of ideas.

4. 1 Academic writing: paragraph level

It helps to think of your assignment in terms of paragraphs in the planning and drafting stages.

- A paragraph consists of **one main point**, and is made up of a number of sentences – a **topic sentence, supporting sentences**, and a **concluding sentence**.
- Think of a paragraph as a brick. A well-organised piece of writing is like laying a brick neatly on top of one another; a disorganised one is like a heap of bricks thrown on the ground.
- Be conscious of how your paragraphs work together to communicate your information and understanding to your audience.



- The length of a paragraph largely depends on the purpose of the paragraph, and what you have set out to talk about in your topic sentence.
- A paragraph that is too long makes it difficult for your audience to follow.
- A paragraph that is too short won't develop the main idea.
- Avoid a one-sentence paragraph. A paragraph needs a topic sentence, followed by sentences of elaboration and explanation (i.e. supporting sentences).

Example of an Academic Paragraph:

❶ Topic Sentence – ❷ Support Sentences» – ❸ Concluding Sentence

❶ A number of problems associated with the traditional routines of handover practices have been identified. ❷ Baldwin and McGinnis (1994, pp. 61-64) find that many handovers are unnecessarily lengthy which means that there is an unacceptable period of time during each shift when nurses are not available in the ward or unit. Another area that has received attention is the content and presentation of handover information. Wills (1994, p. 36) observes that “an unprofessional approach has been noted among some nurses, with derogatory comments about patients or their families”. Lastly, there is the issue of what information nurses actually pass on during the handover. It appears that:

❷ Nurses frequently report on their own activities over the shift rather than providing patient centred information. Information obtained from discussions with relatives is rarely relayed onto other nursing staff, and of the patient information reported, most is described from a medical perspective rather than focusing on the discussion of nursing related information.

(Professional Nurse, 1997, p. 637)

❸ Thus, many serious problems have been identified in traditional handover practices, which may reflect on the professional standing of nurses in this profession.>

Source:

Teaching and Learning Centre, University of New England 2012, *Paragraphs – Academic Writing*, viewed 10 June 2012 <<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/students/factsheets/paragraphs-academic-writing.pdf>>.

4. 2 Academic Writing: sentence level

4. 2. 1 Topic sentence

- A **topic sentence sums up the paragraph** – it tells your audience what the paragraph is about. It performs the same function as the **introduction**, which provides a preview of your assignment. It is usually found at the beginning of a paragraph – the first or second sentence.
- The first sentence should also **connect the paragraph to the previous paragraph**.



4. 2. 2 Logical flow

- The first and last sentences of a paragraph act as **links or transitions** to connect one paragraph to another. Often, the last sentence (i.e. concluding sentence) of a paragraph links it to the next paragraph. These links ensure that there is a smooth flow throughout the writing.
- **Logical flow** should also occur within a paragraph. Each sentence should follow on to the next – the move from one sentence to the next should be logical.
- Information included within a paragraph should be presented in a logical, sequential manner.

Adapted from the following sources:

Morley-Warner, T. 2000, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Centre for Research and Education in the Arts, Sydney.

Learning Development, University of Wollongong 2000, *Effective writing*, accessed 10 June 2012, <<http://unilarning.uow.edu.au/main.html>>

4. 3 Structure

- Check if your faculty recommends a particular structure for assignments. Follow their instructions.
- Re-check that the introduction includes your thesis statement (main argument) and a summary of what you discuss. If you wrote the introduction first your essay may have diverged from it. Correct the introduction to reflect what you have written.
- Check the body of the assignment. Does it link together well between sentences and paragraphs?
- If using headings, check that they are clear. (Headings are generally used in reports, not in essays)
- Are the paragraphs clearly structured?
 - One main idea for each paragraph
 - Clear topic sentences (usually the first sentence)
 - Other sentences that support the topic sentence (elaborate, explain, give examples)
- Does the conclusion of your assignment link back to the topic area/question?
- Does the conclusion summarise what you have said and re-state your thesis statement?

4. 4 Content

- Are there enough ideas to answer the question fully? Could anything be added?
- Are all the ideas relevant to the assignment question?
- Have you taken a position? Can you justify it with examples and evidence from your reading?
- Have you demonstrated a critical approach in your writing? (Is this relevant? Is this important? Is this valid?)



4.5 Reading/Referencing

- Are the sources that support your ideas current, relevant and reliable? Are they academic?
- Can you use more than one source to support some of your ideas?
- Are in-text references made using appropriate referencing style? (E.g. Harvard UTS, APA, Footnote)?
- Is a complete reference list or bibliography provided?
- Are all the in-text citations included in the reference list?

For referencing conventions and use of EndNote/Refworks go to:

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/referencing>

4.6 Style

- Have you used formal vocabulary? For example, *lots of* = *a considerable amount*; *bad* = *unfavourable*; *stay the same* = *stabilize*.
- Have you used an appropriate academic style?
- Check for the use of contractions. For example, *don't/do not*
- Avoid over-use of 'etc.'
- How certain do you want to be? For example, *It is certain that...* / *It appears certain that...* / *It is possible that...*
- Have you avoided personal language? For example, *everybody knows...* = *It is generally accepted...* / *I think that...* = *It is likely that...*

4.7 Grammar & vocabulary

- Does your writing make sense when you read it aloud (to someone else)?
- Have you used any incomplete sentences? For example, *because the study is limited*.
- Have you used correct and consistent verb tenses?
- Is there subject-verb agreement? For example, *the studies show/the study shows*.
- Have you used singular/plural forms correctly? For example, *study/studies*.
- Have you checked word forms? For example, *study* (noun); *studied* (verb); *studying* (noun or verb)
- Have you varied your vocabulary to avoid being repetitive? For example, *The research shows that...* / *it also shows...* / *it reveals...*

4.8 Proofreading

Have you checked for typing, spelling and punctuation errors?

- See the punctuation guide at <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/punc.html>



- Have you used the correct spacing, margin, font size and other presentation requirements?
- Has the word limit matched the assignment requirements?

4. 9 Writing guides and online self-help assistance

Some faculties have guides to help you with your writing, including:

- Arts and Social Sciences:
<http://www.fass.uts.edu.au/students/assessment/preparing/index.html>
- Business: <http://www.business.uts.edu.au/teaching/guide/>
- Law: <http://www.law.uts.edu.au/assessment/WrittenComm.pdf>

Or the Study Skills section in the UTS library:

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/writing-reading-speaking>

Grammarly – Grammarly@EDU is a web-based automated grammar tutor and revision tool for academic writing. Upload draft writing assignments to receive immediate instructional feedback on over 100 points of grammar, punctuation and style.

