

# Effective Academic writing



## Some hints about academic writing

1. **Do the reading first.** This is the secret of success. There are no short cuts. Reading to gather knowledge & understanding rather than looking for the odd quotes. Look up *key words* in the texts; you do not have to read whole books. Make detailed notes on your reading (at least 4/5 books plus websites) & have some quotations noted from your reading with page references.
2. You may write in the first person singular, for example. "My results have shown...". However use it sparingly in academic writing.

### Example 1

"I think the government should do something about educational funding"

Should be written as:

„It could be argued that the government should increase educational funding.”

### Example 2

"Entry level 2 students are very difficult to teach"

Should be written as:

"Behaviour management has been identified as a key issue on many Entry level2 courses."

3. Begin with a brief description of who you are, what you do etc. In the introduction there is no need to say I am going to write about this, that & the other, it should be apparent.
4. The emphasis in writing this submission is on **analysis** & not description. Generally academic writing normally builds on what others have previously done and thought about your subject. This means reading and thinking about what others – practitioners and theorists – have written, and using their ideas in your writing through accurate quotation and citation  
  
Therefore when describing your practices or explaining procedures make a judgement and say how effective they are. Refer to learning theory to back up what you say with plenty of quotes from different sources throughout. Refer to the quotes and link them in with the point you are making.
5. It is useful to define terms used, but use academic texts rather than dictionaries.
6. The outcomes are not to be written in order. They can be repeated & clustered.
7. Avoid long and over-complicated sentences that state a number of different facts. In general, three shorter sentences are better than one long one.
8. Paragraphs should be some length (ideas at this level of work cannot be expressed in a line or two or three). Link paragraphs so that there is a connection between them so that the work flows.

9. Avoid, „as mentioned before’ „as I said earlier’ the reader will remember what was said. Avoid the use of the word „you” at all costs and also avoid American spelling, check the language icon
10. Be precise in your writing; avoid using terms that lack a precise meaning, such as „nice”, „good” or excellent”. Terms like these are **subjective**; your idea of what is meant by „good” is not necessarily the same as another person. Academic writing needs to be **precise** and **clear** to convey your meaning.
11. Avoid sub-titles, bullet points & rhetorical questions.

“How do we engage disaffected learners?”

This is better written as:

“It is important to understand how to engage with disaffected learners.”

12. For every point you make, back up with evidence & say *why* this is important or significant so that you go beyond description. This is a reiteration that your writing is about the analysis of teaching & learning.
13. Be aware of using absolute terms, avoid using “a teacher must...” or “a teacher should do...” or “it is important to...” as these phrases are dogmatic, preaching and do not form part of academic writing. Academic writing is open-minded and enquiring; as a student you should generally wonder about things rather than being certain. Therefore in good academic writing use words like:

Possibly  
Likely  
Seems that  
May  
Could  
Demonstrates that  
Suggests that

Example 1

“The results of the research suggest that.....”

Example 2

“There are never any behaviour problems in classes with older learners”

Should be written as:

“Behaviour is rarely identified as a major issue in classes with older learners.”

14. Where acronyms or technical terminology are used make you explain the key terms, for example:

“Further Education (FE) in the...”

“I use ILPs (Individual Learning Plans) with my learners.”

After the first reference you can the abbreviation.

15. At the end of each paragraph ask yourself the question, so what? This will help you think about the outcomes & analysis & may lead to adding more to the paragraph to explain your point.

16. Add a header so your name, university ID appears on each page, page numbers should appear in the footer.

17. Where possible use the word „teach’ or ‘teaching’ instead of „deliver” and „delivery”

18. Use formal English language not everyday spoken word and **do not use abbreviations**.

| <b>X THIS IS WRONG!</b>               | <b>✓ THIS IS RIGHT!</b>                    |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| can't, don't, wouldn't, haven't, it's | cannot, do not, would not, have not, it is |
| vs.                                   | versus, as opposed to                      |
| etc.                                  | among other examples                       |
| i.e.                                  | that is, in other words                    |

19. Common spelling errors and word misuse for example loose/lose, then/than, were/where, cites/sites.

| <b>X THIS IS WRONG!</b>                                      | <b>✓ THIS IS RIGHT!</b>                                      |
|--|--|
| You will <u>loose</u> marks for doing this.                  | You will not <u>lose</u> marks for doing this.               |
| Spell-check rather <u>then</u> handing in error-filled work. | Spell-check rather <u>than</u> handing in error-filled work. |
| I correct student errors <u>were</u> I can.                  | I correct student errors <u>where</u> I can.                 |
| This page <u>sites</u> famous author Terry Pratchett.        | This page <u>cites</u> famous author Terry Pratchett.        |

20. Always proof-read your work and always get someone else to proof-read it for you.

21. The Internet is unedited and uncontrolled, so you must decide what valid information is and what should be discarded. Try and avoid Wikipedia, the information can be inaccurate.

