

Improve your academic writing

Initial notices

Basic information that informs all workshops

This was our advert...

What are the main characteristics of great academic writing? In this workshop you'll learn about the main aspects of effective academic writing. You will also gain insight on how to develop an approach that is unique to you while also meeting the academic requirements. With input from tutors and students you'll leave with a better understanding of what makes good writing great.

What are SHL workshops?

- Studenthublive is non modular and focuses on study skills relevant to higher education
- This means sessions are skills based and are not subject based.
- SHL workshops do not take the place of subject and skill related tutorials provided by your modules
- All events are always advertised on our website along with studenthome news, social media channels and careers sources
- All events are bookable; workshops do fill up as they are popular

SHL is lively!

- These sessions are large scale
- They are often busy with lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other module based tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon
- You can return to the recording after the event to revisit if needed



Online workshop basics

- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments during the live session.
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website.
- Slides are available to download during the live session and from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>.

Please

- Do NOT share any personal information in the chat pod during the session
- On the recording names will be anonymised to user number
- However if you type anyone's full name or any other personal information in the chat pod it can be seen by everybody and it would also show up on the recording so we would not be able to make the recording available

Today's Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop covering what is meant by academic writing as well as some of the key features
- We'll give some tutor advice and suggestions on areas that are commonly tricky
- You'll also get the chance to discuss things and learn from others through the chat and interactivity features

Inclusivity

- We welcome all students at our workshops. Please do be aware that they are very busy and some students may struggle with the non scripted nature and chat engagement. There is no requirement to engage with the chat if you do not want to.
- Slides are available to download within the live session and from the event page on the [studenthublive](#) website to follow along or prepare for what will come up.

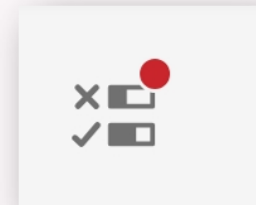
First thoughts

To start the workshop

What do you want to learn?

Using the short answer poll provided please say what you are hoping to learn from today's session

(If you are on a mobile app remember you need to tap into the polling option)



To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon



First thoughts word cloud

What does the term academic writing mean to you? Please add the word or phrase that best explains. We will be building a word cloud to see what words are common.

You need to state individual words or up to 3 words as a phrase, if you press the space or enter button your entry will be sent through.

Look for the box that says enter word here.

Some details & definitions

About academic writing to begin with

What is academic writing poll?

- Please suggest what makes academic writing different from other types of writing like writing to a friend using the other short answer poll available
- Do look at other answers to see what others suggest (you may need to scroll to see all answers)

Academic writing is...

- Factual and to the point
- Objective (not opinionated or subjective)
- Not flowery (unless creative writing!)
- Acknowledging sources
- Appropriately planned and structured
- Specific to the question you are answering
- Convincing the reader that you know and understand that question and are answering it accurately

Academic English

- This is more formal than everyday English.
- Look for specific module guidance as some modules have prepared primers & pre-module guides or part of their module or faculty guide which covers expectations for academic English.
- Studenthome study skills section
<https://help.open.ac.uk/developing-academic-english>

Narrative voice 1

- A narrative voice is the theme and presentation of the writing and is the way that the language is used
- You can also compare text to how I speak.
- In SHL we are discussing skills and showcasing how to use them, but in a narrative fashion – writing a narrative is not the same as a narrative voice

Narrative voice 2

- The theme and narrative voice of this session is academic writing
- We are using various examples, activities and contexts to explain that
- Those examples, activities and contexts are not the actual narrative though

Language and structure

- 'Big word bingo' is not appropriate
- Sentences have ~10-15 words
- Paragraphs have 100-300 words but should always be focused on a single topic each

These are not hard and fast rules but broad guidelines as a starting point

What to include?

- Read your TMA instructions and use the sources that you are asked to use (not others that you might like and not material from other modules)
- Clearly relate the answer to the question (but not the question says this so I am answering that)
- Take cues on style from what you are asked to do – e.g. short answer q (<50 words) or longer prose (500+)

Tutor tips!

- Make sure you say what you meant to say, not what was 'in your head'
- We hear "but that's what I meant" a lot 😊
- You cannot assume your reader will automatically know what you mean if you are not clear, or have difficulties with spellings / grammar
- Don't just word drop because you have seen the word in the module, make it clear that YOU know what it means
- Tutors invariably don't need to know what *I*, *we*, *you* think / did – you need impersonal language

Academic third person poll

- Try rewriting the advert excerpt below in academic third person to cover the key information. Please use the short answer poll provided

“You will also gain insight on how to develop an approach that is unique to you while also meeting the academic requirements.”

Things to be aware of

- Trying to paraphrase short sections is very hard as you can see the words and know what they mean
- It is much better to step back and try and consider the overall purpose of the writing and think more holistically
- If you keep very closely to any original source then you are less likely to be able to write in a way that shows your independent understanding

Finding your voice

- Go back to the purpose of what you are trying to convey
- You are using evidence and information from your module but why do you as a student find this the best evidence?
- Remember you are not giving your own personal subjective opinion but you are showing that you can convey the information as a module representative
- This takes time and practice so when you first start out please don't expect to be perfect immediately!

Tone 1

- Academic writing has a specific type of tone but it is not...
- ...Language that forward and backward is



Tone 2

- Academic writing has a specific type of tone but it is not...
- ...Moribund linguistics from whence one perceives intentional concepts



Tone 3

- Academic writing has a specific type of tone but it is not...
- ...Full of if's but's don't can't lol watevs



Tone 4

- Academic writing has a specific type of tone but it is not...
- ...Opinionated and value laden



Objectivity 1

- Opinion invariably has no place in academic writing, writing can be 99% objective then one word can undermine that – is value laden
- What I mean here is that wording gives an opinion or over-emphasise something

Objectivity 2

- Look at the following piece of text and then use the poll option to indicate which is the value laden word
- Henman presented the theory that attending studenthublive sessions provided extremely useful support for student skills

Adverbs

- Adverbs are often value laden – very, too, completely, as they take something from being a statement (even if it predicts an outcome or gives a result) to an opinionated statement

Your tonal voice

- Academic writing has a specific type of tone and you need to think carefully about who it is that you are aiming at or writing to and for
- Your tone will be different from the one you use for nearly everything else

Tense

- In general this is a presented 'as is'
- If anything it is past tense e.g. Henman presented the theory that attending studenthublive sessions provided valuable support for student skills
- Not Henman was presenting her theory that attending studenthublive sessions will be providing valuable support for student skills

Structure 1

- PEE
- Point – make it
- Evidence – support it with facts
- Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant

Structure 2

- PESELS

- Point - make the point for this paragraph
- Explain - what do you mean by this point
- Support - provide evidence from studies and research
- Evaluate - what is there about this point that is for/against
- Link - to the essay task
- Signpost - to the next paragraph

Referencing poll

- Suggest what the purpose of referencing is

What is referencing?

- Referencing has 2 parts – an in text citation and the full reference details
- The in text citation indicates that a piece of information, idea or fact has been drawn from a specific named source
- The reference details give the full details of what that source is and where it can be found
- The actual format of this does differ according to module and subject which reflects the requirements of the overall academic world

Referencing is not

- ...a way of getting out of writing in your own words
- An essay that is a string of quotations, even with a matching string of citations, is not your own work so would not be appropriate at university level

SHL live events

- Busting myths about academic integrity (which included referencing and why it should be done)
- <https://youtu.be/jy34UaeRDHA?si=9jgYEL-jiVnNkWPG>
- I will also be doing a live session this year on 23rd November at 11am on the same subject (new guests and new information)

Useful resources

- The library runs excellent sessions on referencing and SHL always sends students to their resources (we are not able to run sessions directly about referencing ourselves)
- <http://www.open.ac.uk/library/training-and-events/the-why-and-how-of-referencing>
- Live sessions are advertised on <http://www.open.ac.uk/library/>

Remember

- Referencing is important but is not the be all and end all of any academic piece
- Use a commensurate amount of time and effort for referencing as it is worth
- That doesn't mean ignore it, but equally it shouldn't be taking hours

Discussion activity

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.
- *I have developed my academic writing by...*
- *I intend to work on my academic writing by...*
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them.
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

Take home message

- Academic writing has a specific focus and style and takes some work to get used to but is straightforward in purpose
- It conveys information in an objective balanced way without personal viewpoints or inflection and sticks to the point



- 4 Oct 11am Introduction to essay planning
- 11 Oct 11am Developing your essay planning
- 18 Oct 11am Introduction to Essay writing
- 25 Oct 11am Mastering essay planning
- 28 Sep 11am Generative AI: angel or demon?**
- 10 Oct 11am Academic conduct: Rules, Collaboration & Assessment Explained**

Details and booking information from
<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions [here](#)

Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/> and subscribe for events as they are announced. Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk

