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Academic & Business Writing

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Outline

- What is academic writing?
- Academic writing versus business writing
- What is the process of writing?
- What are the key elements in writing?
- Types of written work
- Key sections of written work
- Approaches to writing
- Short reflective activity



What is academic writing?

- Academic writing is a formal style of writing and follows some standard conventions.
- Each academic discipline has its own specialist vocabulary which you will be expected to learn and use in your own writing.
- **Note:** The following conventions are general guidelines for academic writing. Be sure to follow the specific requirements for your discipline/assignment.



Elements of academic writing

- The ‘Academic’ aspects
 - Discipline content, literature, theories.
- The ‘writing’ aspects
 - Presentation, readability, active versus passive voice/first versus third person.
- The ‘technical’ aspects
 - Referencing style, citations, use of sources, diagrams, tables.



Academic content

- Development of an ‘argument’, ‘thesis statement’ or ‘research question’
- Makes use of appropriate theories.
- Supported by relevant literature.
- Ensures material is well researched/evidence based.
- Ensures all literature and sources of information are correctly acknowledged.
- Uses clear, concise and neutral language.



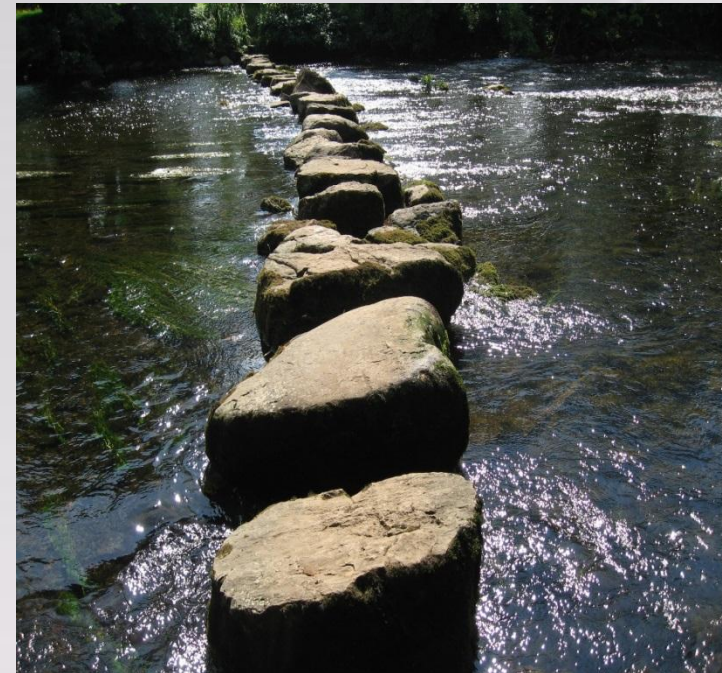
Thesis Statement

- The ‘thesis statement’ expresses the **MAIN IDEA** of your work, the central point that your essay develops/supports.
- Your thesis statement **SHOULD**:
 - Accurately predict your essay’s direction, emphasis, and scope
 - Make no promises that the essay will not fulfil
 - Be direct and straightforward.



Developing paragraphs

- Each body paragraph should contain:
 - Topic Sentence— expresses the main idea of body paragraph.
 - Primary Support—explanation
 - Secondary Support—examples
- Use transitions between paragraphs to link ideas
- Transitions provide the stepping stones your readers need to follow your thinking path





Active versus Passive Voice

- The use of this varies.
- Some disciplines prefer one over the other.
- In many academic disciplines, writing in the first person (using 'I') is **not** acceptable as it is believed to be too subjective and personal.



Active-Passive Comparison

Active Voice

- Personal, first person, third person.
- Use of 'I' and 'we' as the subject.

Passive Voice

- Impersonal
- The object becomes the focus and subject.

I suggest that ...



The suggestion is made that ...

We recommend that ...



It is recommended that ...

We have considered ...



Consideration has been given to ...



Types of Academic and Business Writing

- Essays
- Reports
- Dissertations





Essays

- Tend to present an argument/develop a thesis.
- Focus on evaluating or analysing theories, past research by other people and ideas.
- Rarely include new or original research, but use existing research to present an argument or position.
- Are continuous pieces of prose.
- Are meant to be read carefully.
- Do not generally include recommendations.
- Are mostly used in academic settings.



Reports

- Present information.
- Present data and findings that you have collected yourself e.g. in an experiment, survey, case study or particular experience.
- Are divided into separate sections.
- Their structure means they can be scanned quickly.
- Often include recommendations for action.
- Are typical of writing produced in the workplace.



Dissertations/Theses

- Substantial piece of work.
- Includes a formal structure.
- Also includes critical discussion of literature.
- Includes analysis of existing data and knowledge and collection and analysis of new data.
- Offers originality/a contribution to knowledge.
- Identifies implications for theory and practice.



Key Elements of Written Work

- Title
- Abstract/ Executive Summary/Overview
- Introduction
- Background/Scene Setting
- Literature Review
- Method
- Results/ Analysis
- Discussion
- Conclusion/Recommendations
- References
- Bibliography
- Appendices



Title Page

- Title is important
- It signals the core focus of the report/essay
- Should not be too long.
- Can make use of main title and sub-title:
 - Pigeon-holing Prospects: The Use of Segmentation in Customer Profiling



Abstract

- A brief summary of the entire work, generally around 150 - 200 words.
- It is not an introduction.
- Write the abstract after you have written everything.
- It should state: what you've done, why, how and to what effect or purpose.





Introduction

- Comes at the start of the work.
- It is forward-looking.
- Provides an overview of the context.
- It states the purpose or aim.
- Indicates what will be covered, the content.
- Represents approx. 10% of the overall word length.



Literature Review

- Not always needed in a standard business report- but required for thesis/dissertation
- Critical evaluation of the literature on the topic or issue of study
- Purpose: acknowledge the body of knowledge that exists and use the discussion to expose or identify gaps for investigation.
- Thus, highlighting the potential contribution to be made.



Methodology, results, discussion

- Methodology summarises what you did, how you did it and why you did it that way.
- Results describe what you discovered, observed, in your research.
- Discussion - discusses and explains your findings, relating them to previous research.
- Sometimes results and discussion are integrated rather than separated.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- Conclusion:
 - Sums up the main points.
 - Creates a sense of closure.
 - Should NOT introduce new material.
 - Should draw out implications of the findings – for theory and practice.
- Recommendations
 - suggestions for future action (often found in business reports)
- 10% of the report – significant. Not just a few lines.



References

- References are all the sources of information that you have directly cited or referred to in the text.
- The way in which references are cited in the text and listed depends on the referencing style used.
- There are many referencing styles – some are discipline-specific. Use the one for your discipline.



Referencing styles

- **Author-date method**

- According to Jones (2010) the global economy is in turmoil.
- Jones, P. (2010). The State of the Global Economy, *Journal of Global Economics*, 40(3), 55-68.
- All references listed in alphabetical order by author last name.
- <http://www.harvardreferencing.org.uk/>

- **Numeric method**

- It has been noted that the global economy is in turmoil [21].
- [21] P. Jones (2010). The State of the Global Economy, *Journal of Global Economics*, 40(3), 55-68.
- All references listed in numerical order by order of citation.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vancouver_system

- **Footnotes method**

- The fact that the global economy is in turmoil has been stated.¹
- ¹ Jones, P. (2010). The State of the Global Economy, *Journal of Global Economics*. 40(3). 55-68.



Appendices

- Appendices contain material that is too detailed to put in the main body.
- It adds further information.
- Can be read in isolation.
- Appendices should not form part of the essential reading of the report.
- Things to put in an appendix:
 - Questionnaires, interview guides, detailed tables of results (providing the key results are in the main body of the report)



Academic writing versus Business writing

- **Academic writing**
 - A formal, structured introduction, including as thesis statement.
 - Presentation of an argument, with support from expert sources to highlight the broad contribution to be made.
 - Theoretical underpinning to the argument.
 - Referencing for all sources used.
 - Evidence of the author's position, but without using 'I think' or 'in my opinion'.
 - Focus predominantly on the implications for theory and extension of knowledge (but also practice).
- **Business writing**
 - A short contextualised introductory paragraph.
 - A set of objectives or aims rather than an argument.
 - Referencing of sources used, but not as extensive.
 - Theory not essential, although sometimes referred to.
 - Author is not usually present in the writing.
 - Focus on the implications for management and business practice.
 - Focus on recommended action and implementation.



Different approaches to writing



The Watercolourist



The Architect



The Bricklayer



The Oil Painter



The Watercolourist



- Able to complete an essay in one sitting.
- Ideas and structure form simultaneously.
- Minimum editing required.
- Useful skill for hand written work in exams!
- Sometimes, editing is desirable!



The Architect

- Likes to develop a plan.
- Executes the plan.
- Undertakes minimal editing/change.
- Works if you have a clear idea of what you want to say.
- Structure can sometimes inhibit.





The Bricklayer



- Works with or without a plan.
- Building the work in 'chunks' or 'blocks' that are then joined together.
- Minimal editing.
- A slow process.



The Oil Painter

- May have no fixed plan or strategy.
- Sorts out ideas in the act of writing.
- Re-working, adding and editing in the process.
- Useful as a way of developing ideas.
- Can often feel 'unfinished'.





Activity



- Are you a Watercolourist, Architect, Bricklayer or Oil Painter?
- Discuss in pairs or threes.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- How can you learn from each other?