**What Is Academic Writing? | Dos and Don’ts for Students**

Academic writing is a formal style of writing used in universities and scholarly publications. You’ll encounter it in journal articles and books on academic topics, and you’ll be expected to write your essays, research papers, and dissertation in academic style.

Academic writing follows the same writing process as other types of texts, but it has specific conventions in terms of content, structure and style.

Academic writing is… Academic writing is not…

Formal and unbiased Personal Long-winded Emotive and grandiose

Clear and precise

Focused and well structured

Well sourced

Correct and consistent

**Types of academic writing**

Academics mostly write texts intended for publication, such as journal articles, reports, books, and chapters in edited collections. For students, the most common types of academic writing assignments are listed below.

Type of academic text Definition

Essay A fairly short, self-contained argument, often using sources from a class in response to a question provided by an instructor.

Research paper A more in-depth investigation based on independent research, often in response to a question chosen by the student.

Thesis/dissertation The large final research project undertaken at the end of a degree, usually on a dissertation topic of the student’s choice.

Research proposal An outline of a potential topic and plan for a future dissertation or research project.

Literature review A critical synthesis of existing research on a topic, usually written in order to inform the approach of a new piece of research.

Lab report A write-up of the aims, methods, results, and conclusions of a lab experiment.

Annotated bibliography A list of source references with a short description or evaluation of each source.

Different fields of study have different priorities in terms of the writing they produce. For example, in scientific writing it’s crucial to clearly and accurately report methods and results; in the humanities, the focus is on constructing convincing arguments through the use of textual evidence. However, most academic writing shares certain key principles intended to help convey information as effectively as possible.

Whether your goal is to pass your degree, apply to graduate school, or build an academic career, effective writing is an essential skill.

Academic writing is…

Formal and unbiased

Academic writing aims to convey information in an impartial way. The goal is to base arguments on the evidence under consideration, not the author’s preconceptions. All claims should be supported with relevant evidence, not just asserted.

To avoid bias, it’s important to represent the work of other researchers and the results of your own research fairly and accurately. This means clearly outlining your methodology and being honest about the limitations of your research.

The formal style used in academic writing ensures that research is presented consistently across different texts, so that studies can be objectively assessed and compared with other research.

Because of this, it’s important to strike the right tone with your language choices. Avoid informal language, including slang, contractions, clichés, and conversational phrases:

Also, a lot of the findings are a little unreliable.

Moreover, many of the findings are somewhat unreliable.