

'Let's get on with it'



What is an **ACADEMIC STYLE**?

Academic Style is the formal use of language that university students are required to use in their oral and written assignments, especially seminar presentations, essays and reports.

Academic Style has the following characteristics. It:

- is formal.
- is impersonal and objective.
- is cautious and tentative.
- does not repeat words and phrases.
- upholds accuracy and coherency.
- is concise.
- references other writers' works.

01 Formal Language

While using formal language, you need to:

- 01 use specialized terms (jargon) if your essay or report is on a specialized subject/topic.
- 02 avoid rhetorical questions—questions you don't need answers for, e.g. "Can you believe that?"
- 03 use carefully structured language, e.g. complete sentences.
- 04 avoid slang words, e.g. 'set'.
- 05 avoid casual language, e.g. 'trashy'. So instead of saying that an essay was *trashy*, you might say that it was *'poorly researched'*.
- 06 use full forms rather than contractions, e.g. use *'does not'*, but not *'doesn't'*.

- 07 consider the use of noun structures rather than wordy verb structures, e.g. "Comprehension is aided by repetition" is more formal than "You can understand something better if it is repeated."

Hint: Too much nominalisation can make your assignment complex and hard to understand. You have to strike a balance here.

02 Impersonal and objective tone

This means the language of a written text sounds independent from the writer and reader. To achieve the impersonal, objective tone, you should:

- 01 avoid personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you', to refer to yourself or the reader.
- 02 avoid using judgemental words that indicate your feelings about a subject. (appreciate, dislike)
- 03 avoid using words that are emotive. (terrible, beautiful)
- 04 use the passive voice more than the active one.

Active	Passive
e.g., 'The panel made the decision'	'The decision was made by the panel'

- 05 use 'There', 'It' or 'One' as subjects of sentences, e.g., There is no problem. It can be problematic. One must avoid problems at all costs.

03 Cautious and Tentative Language

It is wise to use a cautious tone in your writing, because very often you are discussing issues in which there is no absolute answer, definition or solution. If you present something as the 'best way', other writers may prove you wrong. So it's usually better to 'suggest' rather than 'state'.

The following are some phrases which reflect a cautious or tentative tone:

It appears that... Students usually/sometimes ...

It seems as though... The majority of ...
This suggests that... It is possible/ probable/likely ...

04 Avoid repetition of words

- Do not repeat words and phrases but use words with similar meanings the second time around.
- Do not repeat ideas; if you have said something once, trust your readers to remember or comprehend it.

05 Be accurate and uphold coherency



For further information see the **Connectives Study Guide**

- Use language accurately and appropriately.
- Do not exaggerate or make sweeping generalisations as we often do when speaking.
- Use effective linking words to link your ideas together smoothly

06 Be concise and precise

- Aim to be as accurate and clear as possible.
- Use specific examples to illustrate your points.
- Use powerful reporting words e.g. 'he contended'.



For further information see the **Using References Study Guide**

07 References

At university, almost all pieces of academic work require referencing and marks are awarded for doing it well. Referencing is therefore an essential skill that you need to acquire.

There are 3 main reasons why you must reference clearly, systematically and consistently:

01. A well-referenced piece of work demonstrates to your lecturer that you have thoroughly researched the topic, and that your work is based on evidence.

02. Readers of your work may wish to look at the external information you have referred to in your writing, so they will need full details of the source to locate it.
03. If you include the works or ideas of others without referencing them clearly, this is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of academic cheating and carries strict penalties.



For further information see the **Avoiding Plagiarism Study Guide**



Activities

01 Use formal vocabulary

Rewrite the following sentences in the academic style.

- The old, broken-down house needs fixing.
- Luxury is probably affordable to those with dough.
- Did you know that oxygen is vital to human existence?
- Strikes result from unresolved employee grievances.
- He's had to deal with the problem by himself.

02 Adopt an impersonal, objective stance

Rewrite the following sentences in an impersonal objective style.

- You must adhere to the rules.
- The Prime Minister addressed the assembly.
- I envision a change of leadership soon.

03 Use tentative language but do not make assertions

Rewrite the following assertions in tentative language.

- It is common knowledge that the issue of poverty in Fiji is becoming worse.
- Good editing always results in good marks.
- All the candidates were calm.

04 Avoid repetition of words and ideas

Replace the underlined with synonymous words.

- (a) The statesman warned the warring sides.

05 Be accurate and uphold coherency

Rewrite sentence (a) accurately and link sentence (b) with an appropriate linking word.

- (a) The guard stood around the queen.
(b) Some people interpret 'proactive' to mean 'aggressive' or 'insensitive'; _____ that is not the case at all.

06 Be concise

Rewrite the following sentence in a concise manner.

- (a) Trust is the highest form of human motivation because it brings out the best in people who are trustworthy.

07 Reference correctly, in both in-text referencing and in the bibliography.

Rewrite the following correctly.

- (a) 'The theory was first propounded in 1993' (Confort. 1997. 58).
(b) Rees (2006—10) claims...
(c) Rees, B; 2006, endeavours, Blackwell. New York.



Answers

- Use tentative language but do not make assertions**
a The issue of poverty in Fiji is possibly/probably becoming worse.
b The issue of poverty in Fiji may be/might be/appears to be/seems to be becoming worse.
c Good editing often results in good marks.
c Most/Many candidates remained calm.
- Avoid repetition of words and ideas**
a The senator warned the factions.
b accurate and uphold coherency
a The guard stood behind the queen
b but
- Be concise**
a Trust brings out the best in trustworthy people.
- Reference correctly, in both in-text referencing and in the bibliography.**
a "The theory was first propounded in 1993" (Confort 1997, p. 58)
b Rees (2006, p. 10) claims that...
c Rees, B 2006, Endeavours, Blackwell, New York.
- Adopt an impersonal, objective stance**
a The rules must be adhered to.
b The assembly was addressed by the Prime Minister.
c One envisions a change in leadership soon.
There is an envisioned change of leadership soon.
It is envisioned that leadership will change soon.
- Use formal Vocabulary**
a The dilapidated house needs repairing.
b Luxury is probably affordable to the wealthy.
c Oxygen is vital to human existence.
d Industrial action is the outcome of poor industrial relations.
e He has had to deal with the problem by himself.