

Academic Writing: Definition and Criteria

'**Academic (adj.)**' is related to education especially in schools and universities.

'**Formal (adj.)**' could mean very correct and suitable for official occasions.

'**Informal (adj.)**' could mean suitable for normal conversation and writing to friends rather than serious speech or letters.

A very broad definition of **academic writing** could include any writing assignment given in an academic setting, such as: Books and book reports, Translations, Essays, Research paper or research article, Conference paper, Academic journal, Dissertation and Thesis, Abstract and alike. The objective of the academic writing is to inform rather than entertain, using a standard written form of the language.

Qualities of a Good Academic Writing:

1- A student should avoid:

- **colloquial words and expressions:** "stuff", "a lot of", "thing", "sort of", kid, a lot of/lots of, cool and alike.
- **using informal verbs**, (verb + preposition) (only if necessary). For example: use 'consider' rather than 'look at'.
- **asking questions in reports or research papers.**
- using **redundant words**. For example: 'Concisely' is better than 'In as few words as possible',
- **Directives** that demands the reader to "Do this" or "Do that"
- **Mistakes** in spelling and punctuation.
- **writing incomplete** or having grammatically mistaken sentences.
- **Contractions** (in other words, use "It is" rather than "It's", 'had not' rather than 'hadn't).
- **Abbreviations** that must be spelt out in full when first used, the only exceptions being when the acronym is better known than the full name (BBC, ITV or NATO for example).
- emotional expressions, such as: exclamation points, ellipsis, etc., unless they are being cited from another source.

2- A writer should be objective that:

- The first person point of view (I or we) or second person (you) are not used.
- when referring to a certain career or job (such as: "doctor"), 'he' or 'him' are avoided. Instead, it is made plural and referred to as 'they' or 'them'.
- The passive form of writing or impersonal subjects, instead, is used; as in: It is believed that..., it can be argued that..., Water changes its qualities when being....

3- **Tense:** a correct tense should be used. Probably, different tenses need to be used throughout depending upon the context, such as:

- writing about established knowledge requires the present tense to be used. For example: Diabetes is a condition where the amount of glucose in the blood is too high because the body cannot use it properly.
- writing about an experiment that was carried out or a method that is used requires the past tense to be used. For example: The experiment showed wide variations in results where the variable was altered even slightly.
- When reporting on the findings or research of others, the present tense should be used. This is so because it is a writing about something that is considered as an established knowledge. For

example: Smith's research from 2012 finds that regular exercise may contribute to good cardiovascular health.

- When writing about conclusions or what have been found, then the present tense is used. For example: In this case there is not a large difference between the two diameter values (from Feret's diameter and calculated equation), which again is probably due to the fact that the average circularity ratio is on the high end of the scale, 0.88, and therefore infers near circular pores.
- writing about figures that have been presented in a table or chart requires the use of the present tense. For example: These figures show that the number of birds visiting the hide increase every year in May....

below are some formal and informal expressions that a student at college is advised to consider while writing:

Verbs

Informal	Formal
Begin, start	commence
blow up	explode
bring about	cause
deal with	handle
end	finish
find out	discover, ascertain
free	release
get	obtain
get in touch with	contact
go	depart
go against	oppose
go down	decrease
go up	increase
help	assist
It's about	It concerns, It's in regards to
keep	Retain, preserve
leave out	omit
let	permit
look at	examine
mend	repair
need	require

Informal	Formal
point out	indicate
put off	postpone, delay
rack up	accumulate
ring up	call
say no	reject
say sorry	apologize, apologise
seem	appear
set up	establish
shorten	decrease
show	Demonstrate.
stand for	represent
stop	cease
tell	inform
think about	consider

Letter Expressions - Informal & Formal speech

Informal	Formal
Hi Robert,	Dear Sir or Madam,
Hope to hear from you soon	I look forward to hearing from you
Just wanted to let you know...	I am writing to inform you...
Love,	Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully,
You can call me if you need anything	Please do not hesitate to contact me

Transitions (connectors) and other words

Informal	Formal
again and again	repeatedly
All right	Acceptable
Also	In addition, Additionally
Alternative choices	Alternatives

Informal	Formal
Anyway,	Notwithstanding, Nevertheless
ASAP	as soon as possible
at first	initially
at once	immediately
bad	negative
Basic fundamentals	Fundamentals
better	superior
But	However
cell	cell phone
chance	opportunity
cheap	inexpensive
childish	immature
clear	transparent
empty	vacant
enough	sufficient
good	positive
house	residence
Basically	To summarize,
In as few words as possible	Concisely
in charge	responsible
in the end	finally
kids	children
lack	deficiency
lively	energetic
loaded	rich
lots of/ a lot of	much, many
lucky	fortunate
mad	insane
mainly	principally

Informal	Formal
net	Internet
next	subsequently
Okay, OK	acceptable
on and off	intermittently
photo	photograph
Plus/Also	Moreover/ Furthermore
really big	considerable
really, very	definitely
right	correct
smart	intelligent
So	Therefore/Thus
T.V.	television
To sum up	In conclusion,
tons of, heaps of	large quantities of, a number of
totally	completely, strongly
whole	complete