

## Writing in an Academic Tone

One of the most important skills that you can learn through academic writing is how to write in a formal, sophisticated, yet concise style. This type of writing will be of use to you no matter your academic and career goals. It is, however, also one of the most difficult writing skills to master. Here are some pointers to help you in this effort:

Informal Language is characterized by expressions that are often taken from spoken English. This type of language is appropriate for informal journal writing, reflections, personal letters and creative works. It is also usually acceptable to write from the first and second-person perspective (using “I,” “we,” “you,” etc).

Formal Language is the language most commonly used in academic papers like essays, research papers and reports. It is sometimes recommended that you omit the use of “I,” “we,” or “you” in this type of writing and write from the third-person perspective, which is much more objective.

Inclusive Language is language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular people or groups. It is also language that does not deliberately or inadvertently exclude people from being seen as part of a group. Inclusive language is sometimes called non-discriminatory language.

Non-discriminatory language avoids false assumptions about people and helps to promote respectful relationships. A commitment to inclusive language is an important attribute of a modern, diverse and inclusive society. Inclusive language enables everyone to feel that they are being reflected in what is being said.

## Types of Language to Avoid in Academic Writing

**Clichés** are figurative expressions that are overused and have lost their meaning. Avoid using these in academic writing. Often, the meanings of clichés are not precise and therefore can create confusion for the reader.

### Examples of clichés:

- “good things come to those who wait.”
- “beat around the bush.”
- “in a nutshell.”
- “two birds and one stone.”
- “adding insult to injury.”
- “better late than never.”

**Colloquialisms** are expressions used in conversational language. However, this type of language is not commonly accepted in academic writing because it contributes to a more informal tone.

### Colloquialisms can be:

**Contractions:** Avoid using words such as “can’t,” “won’t” or other contractions in academic writing. Instead, use “cannot” or “will not.”

**Fillers:** Avoid using filler words such as “like,” “well,” “really,” or “anyway.”

**Informal terms:** Avoid using “folks,” “kids,” “guy,” “OK,” “pretty good,” “hassle,” “kind of,” or “at the end of the day.”

**Slang** is made up of vocabulary that is formed and used by a group of people who share common experiences and common interests. Avoid using slang in academic writing because it may mislead or cause confusion for the reader.

**Jargons** can be found within every discipline of study. The unique vocabulary includes certain terms that persons within the field regularly use and understand in their writing and communication. It is important, however, to keep the audience you are writing for in mind. If you are writing for a general audience, made up of people not necessarily involved with the

specific discipline you are writing about, you should avoid jargon and technical terms. If you absolutely must use a technical term, define it within your paper.

**General vs. Specific wording:** Use concrete and specific words as much as possible and avoid abstract and general words.

Abstract words refer to qualities, ideas, and actions that we cannot experience through our senses, such as “culture,” “friendship,” “loyalty,” and “democracy.” Concrete words refer to things we can experience through our senses, such as “orange,” “blood,” “scream,” “laugh,” “hug,” “tick,” “swamp.”

General words refer to large groups of people or things. For example, the word athlete refers to everyone who plays a sport. To make this idea more specific, athlete can be narrowed down to professional athlete, professional tennis player, professional female tennis player, top ten female tennis players, and finally to Naomi Osaka, one of the top ten female tennis players. Using concrete and specific words will make your paper more precise.

<b>Informal Language</b>	<b>Academic Language</b>
Repetition of words	Variety of words, more sophisticated
Sentences start with “and” or “but”	Sentences start with transition words, such as “however,” “moreover,” and “in addition”
Use of slang such as “whatever” or “like”	Replaces slang with accurate descriptions
Appropriate for use in causal, social settings	Appropriate for use in all academic and work place settings
Can vary greatly by ethnicity, region, gender, age	Common language register for all