



Developing your Academic Voice

In life, we have different voices. The voice we use with our friends is different to the voice we use in assignments. At university, the voice we use is formal and backed by academic research.

Components of formal writing

There are three main components of formal writing:

1. Writing in the third person – avoid I, you, or we.
2. Using objective or neutral words.
3. Writing words out fully – avoid i.e., e.g., or can't, won't, don't.



1. "In this essay, I will argue..." becomes "This essay will argue..."
2. "This horrendous act of injustice..." becomes "This momentous act of injustice".
3. "E.g., can't, won't, don't" become "For example; cannot; will not; do not".

Active vs Passive Voice

Academic writing should be as direct, precise and clear as possible. One way to do this is writing actively. This is not always possible – sometimes the passive voice fits better. However, where possible, try to give ownership to the person completing the action. This means the **subject** (the person doing the action) comes before the **object** which has the action done to it. The **verb** (the action) comes in the middle.

Active Voice Examples

- The research assistant designed the survey.
- The manager signed the order.

Passive Voice Examples

- The survey was designed by the research assistant.
- The order was signed by the manager.

How to express opinion or stance

In your university assignments, your opinion or stance (position) is based upon academic research. Therefore, we express it using terms that convey this objectively. We do not use the first person 'I' because we are trying to indicate that our beliefs are based upon academic research.

Examples of ways to express opinion or stance

As [author surname] has indicated, it is important to note that...

Professor [author surname]'s work highlights the significance of...

These results show a significant...

This theory is problematic due to...

This cannot be overemphasised...

A possible explanation...

This can clearly be seen...

It is evident that...

This shows a relationship between...

Scholars, such as [author surnames] have overlooked...

Adverbs are a good way to express opinion or stance

Evidently...	Seemingly...
Surprisingly...	Clearly...
Unsurprisingly...	Naturally...
Curiously...	