



Introduction to Academic Writing

Academic writing has rules which need to be followed to create clear and concise assignments that are easy to understand.

What are academic writing conventions?

There are seven important academic conventions that you need to know.

Personal Pronouns – avoid first person (I, me, we, us) and second person (you). Use the third person (they/them).

Tenses – use the present simple where possible. For example: Most scholars argue that...

Voice – writing should be formal, clear and concise. Where possible, use the active voice.

For example:

Active Voice: The zombies ate the Academic Skills Tutors.

Passive Voice: The Academic Skills Tutors were eaten by the zombies.

Numbers – numbers under ten should be written out in full. Numbers over ten should be digits.

Contractions – write these out in full. For example: “can’t” should be “cannot”.

Italics – only use italics in the main text for book and journal titles, and the names of organisations, newspapers, magazines and websites.

Abbreviations – only use an abbreviation after the name or concept has been written out in full. For example: National Health Service (NHS).

How do we structure essays?

Essays have three main sections:

Introduction; Main Body; Conclusion

Essays make arguments. This means you **MUST** have a thesis statement (answer to the question) in the introduction.

Essays do not have:

Sub-headings

How do we structure reports?

Reports have:

Subheadings

Formal structures (type-dependent)

Research reports have the following sections: Introduction; Literature Review; Methodology and Methods; Results; Discussion; Conclusion.

How do we structure paragraphs?

Every paragraph needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Therefore, it needs a **minimum of three sentences** to make a paragraph. There are lots of different paragraph formats, but one of the most common and recommended is PEEL.

PEEL stands for:

Point - This is also called the topic sentence. This is the main point of your paragraph that you're going to persuade your reader to believe in. It comes early in the paragraph, often it is the first sentence.

Evidence - This is information – paraphrased or quoted from primary research or secondary reading – that backs up your point by showing that others support it.

Explanation - Here you explain how the evidence supports the point and why it is relevant. You may also need to bring in limitations here and discuss the strengths and/or weaknesses of your evidence to give it further validity.

Link - This is where you re-enforce your argument and draw it together with other points to show how your points are fitting