

ACADEMIC WRITING (UNIT I)

A simple definition of academic writing is hard to come by because it refers to writing done for several reasons. Academic writing is any formal written work produced in an academic setting.

Writing for Education

A broad definition of academic writing is any writing done to fulfil a requirement of a college or university. Academic writing is also used for publications that are read by teacher and researchers or presented at conferences. A very broad definition of academic writing could include any writing assignment given in an academic setting.

Types of academic writing

Academics mostly write texts intended for publication, such as journal articles, reports, books, and chapters in edited collections. For students, the most common types of academic writing assignments are listed below.

Type of academic text	Definition
<u>Essay</u>	A fairly short, self-contained argument, often using sources from a class in response to a question provided by an instructor.
<u>Research paper</u>	A more in-depth investigation based on independent research, often in response to a question chosen by the student.
<u>Thesis/dissertation</u>	The large final research project undertaken at the end of a degree, usually on a topic of the student's choice.
<u>Research proposal</u>	An outline of a potential topic and plan for a future dissertation or research project.
<u>Literature review</u>	A critical synthesis of existing research on a topic, usually written in order to inform the approach of a new piece of research.
<u>Abstract</u>	This is a short summary of a long document
<u>Explication</u>	This is a work which explains part of a particular work.

Characteristics of Academic Writing

Most academic disciplines employ their own stylistic conventions. However, all academic writing shares certain characteristics.

1. Formal and unbiased

Academic writing aims to convey information in an impartial way. The goal is to base arguments on the evidence under consideration, not the author's preconceptions. All claims should be supported with relevant evidence, not just asserted.

The formal style used in academic writing ensures that research is presented consistently across different texts, so that studies can be objectively assessed and compared with other research.

2. Clear and limited focus

The focus of an academic paper—the argument or research question—is established early by the thesis statement. Every paragraph and sentence of the paper connects back to that primary focus.

3. Logical structure.

All academic writing follows a logical, straightforward structure. In its simplest form, academic writing includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introduction provides background information, lays out the scope and direction of the essay, and states the thesis. The body paragraphs support the thesis statement, with each body paragraph elaborating on one supporting point. The conclusion refers back to the thesis, summarizes the main points, and highlights the implications of the paper's findings. Each sentence and paragraph logically connects to the next in order to present a clear argument.

4. Evidence-based arguments.

Academic writing requires well-informed arguments. Statements must be supported by evidence, whether from scholarly sources, results of a study or experiment, or quotations from a primary text. The use of evidence gives credibility to an argument.

5. Language

The language in academic paper needs to be clear and words need to be chosen for their precision. Slang words, jargon, abbreviations, or clichés should be avoided.

6. Point-of-view

The point of view should be in the third person, as the focus of academic writing is to educate on the facts, not support an opinion.

7. Approach

Deductive reasoning is a big part of academic writing as the readers have to follow the path that brought the author to his/her conclusion.

Academic Writing Structure

One important aspect of academic writing is the use of a clear and fairly predictable structure. By 'structure' we mean the shape of the whole text. Although writers vary in their level of formality, we do expect academic texts to have certain predictable structures. In many academic texts, it is easy to see the organisational structure because it is marked by headings and subheadings. An academic paper has three distinct sections - the introduction, body and conclusion:

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the introduction, you must grab the reader's attention and identify the thesis of the paper. You can do this by starting with:

- Several questions
- A quote from a famous work or person
- Some interesting facts or information
- A definition of an important term related to the work

2. BODY:

This is the main part of the work and the paragraphs must be clearly written and be arranged in a logical order, like chronologically or in order of importance. Each initial sentence links the preceding paragraph and the whole section flows smoothly.

Within each paragraph, the sentences need to flow and refer back to the topic. Cohesion is achieved by repeating important words, using synonyms for the main subject, and using transitional words like: however, such as, therefore, and for example.

3. CONCLUSION:

In the conclusion, you re-emphasize the thesis and summarize all the main points. The conclusion consists of one paragraph which shows the final conclusion to the reader.

Paraphrasing, and summarizing

Writing information in your own words is a highly acceptable way to include the ideas of other people in your writing. There are two ways you can do this: paraphrasing and summarising. It is very important, however, to paraphrase and summarise correctly because there is a fine balance between acceptable and unacceptable paraphrasing and summarising.

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase is to rewrite something using different words without changing the original meaning. This is what is usually meant by the phrase 'in your own words'. The paraphrase should be clearer and more easily understood than the original and is often about the same length. Paraphrases are a good alternative to using direct quotations.

Paraphrasing Guidelines

1. Use your own words and sentence structure: One of the major facets of paraphrasing is that it is in your own words and uses your own sentence structure. Most likely you will also have to include some words from the original, especially if the language or terms are discipline specific, but make sure the phrasing and sentence structures are your own.
2. If needed, use quotation marks: If you use phrasing that isn't yours, be sure to use quotation marks.
3. Introduce the paraphrase using attributive tags: Be sure to include attributive tags so that your material can be incorporated smoothly into what your writing. Additionally, this allows you to indicate to your reader what ideas are yours and which ones are borrowed.
4. Cite, cite, cite: Be sure to indicate the source using an appropriate citation guide. Even though you have written the paraphrase using your own words, the ideas come from another source, one that you need to be sure to cite in order to avoid plagiarism.

Summarizing

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). A summary is a short retelling of a longer written passage, containing the author's most important ideas. Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Summarizing Guidelines

1. Consider only the main ideas: Don't get bogged down in the details. Summaries provide enough information about the source so that your reader can understand the original text. Remember that summaries are always shorter than the original and, depending on requirements, can even be one sentence.

2. Use your own words: Your summary should be in your own words and sentence structure. If you do use phrases from the text, you will need to use quotation marks.
3. Cite, cite, cite: Be sure to indicate the source using an appropriate citation guide. Even though you have written the summary using your own words, the ideas come from another source, one that you need to be sure to cite in order to avoid plagiarism.

Difference between Paraphrasing and Summarizing:

Paraphrasing	Summarizing
Determines source is not worth directly quoting, but the details and examples of a specific passage/paragraph are important	Includes source's main ideas since they are important, but specific details and examples are not
Finds itself about the same length as the original text	Finds itself shorter than the original text, sometimes only a sentence
Wants to understand the logic of complex passages	Uses direct quotations sparingly, if at all

Why use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries?

Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing are often used to include facts as textual evidence to support your own points when writing argumentative, analysis, or research papers.

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries serve many purposes. You might use them to:

- Provide support for claims or add credibility to your writing
- Refer to work that leads up to the work you are now doing
- Give examples of several points of view on a subject
- Call attention to a position that you wish to agree or disagree with
- Highlight a particularly striking phrase, sentence, or passage by quoting the original
- Distance yourself from the original by quoting it in order to cue readers that the words are not your own
- Expand the breadth or depth of your writing