

## SPLASH Info Sheet

# Making your Writing More Academic

Academic essays are. . .	So how can I make MY writing more ACADEMIC?
<b>P</b> recise	Use language accurately, be exact with figures, pay attention to detail
<b>O</b> bjective	Be open-minded, fair and unemotional in your approach – avoid I, YOU and WE
<b>W</b> ell-presented	Make sure it looks professional – check your module handbook for guidelines
<b>E</b> dition / proofread	Leave time to read through, re-order, change parts, add ideas, correct grammar
<b>R</b> eferenced	Ensure all ideas from books / journals have references. Add reference list
<b>F</b> ormal	Avoid slang / jargon. Use more sophisticated vocabulary. Do not abbreviate
<b>U</b> se caution	Do not make over-generalisations. Things are rarely black and white
<b>L</b> inked	Use connecting words / phrases to show your reader how ideas are related
<b>E</b> xplicit	Always be clear, avoid vague statements and vocabulary
<b>S</b> tructured	Write in paragraphs – one main idea per paragraph – think carefully about order
<b>S</b> upported	Include examples and evidence - paraphrased, quoted, summarised ideas
<b>A</b> nalytical	Break down issues into component parts – show how they are related
<b>Y</b> our own work	Be original. NEVER copy someone's work – student or author – it is plagiarism!

### Poor academic style:

Example 1:

**A lot of people think** that the **weather is getting worse**. **They say** that this has been **going on** for **quite a long time**. **I think** that they are quite right. **Research** has shown that **we now get storms etc all the time**.

### Analysis:

a lot of = imprecise  
people think = personal - focus on idea not person  
weather = imprecise / short term  
getting worse = informal expression  
they say = informal / pronoun use  
going on = informal expression  
quite a long time = imprecise – how long?  
I think = informal / personal expression  
research = vague – whose research?  
we now get – informal  
storms etc = vague  
all the time = over generalised

*Example passage adapted from Bailey (2006) Academic Writing*

### Good academic style:

Example 2:

It is widely believed that the climate is deteriorating. It is claimed that this process has been continuing for nearly 100 years. This belief appears to be supported by McKinley (1997) who shows a 55% increase in the frequency of severe winter gales since 1905

### Analysis:

The above re-written passage is **formal, explicit** (not vague), **objective** (not personal), **precise, uses caution** (avoids overgeneralisations) and is **supported** with evidence which is **referenced**.

### What SPLASH says:

A formal academic writing style will give your assignments more authority, and they will therefore appear more sophisticated.

However, as well as the language you choose, the structure of your arguments and the way that you order and link your ideas are both very important.

Be careful not to go too far the other way, though. Do not just use complex words for the sake of it and try not to write long, unnecessarily complicated sentences. Remember - formality not complexity.

Finally don't forget those finishing touches. Carefully checking and correcting your grammar and spelling as well as ensuring a professional look could make that vital difference to your grades.