Writing in Academic Style
Objectives:

• to help you develop a personal writing style that is clear, concise and precise;
• to show you how to make clear choices of structure and language that will help you to respond to any writing task in a style which is appropriate to whatever that task may be.
Markers look for four general areas when deciding on a mark for a written assignment:

- how well you have handled the topic and followed the assignment instructions;
- the quality of your ideas and information;
- the way you have organised your paper;
- the quality of your writing style and grammar.
‘Content’ versus ‘Style’

Content: what is being said
Style: how it is said

He experienced the ultimate negative surgical outcome.
He died in surgery.
Elements of academic writing:

• It is predictable
• It is logically structured
• It is formal
• It is cautious
• It is objective
• It is critical
• It is well-researched with references to academic works
Predictable and logical structure

Introduction
• Background information
• Thesis statement/purpose
• Outline

Body paragraphs
• Topic sentence
• Supporting sentences
• Concluding sentence

Conclusion
• Restate the question
• Summarise the arguments
• Show how the arguments have answered the question

Reference list
Formal language

Avoid:

• Personal pronouns
  You can see the results in Table 1.
  The results can be seen in Table 1.

• Emotive language
  I dislike Piaget's conclusion…
  Piaget's conclusion is debatable…

• Contractions and abbreviations
  E.g. unemployment figures won't improve until the economy is stronger.
  For example, unemployment figures will not improve until the economy is stronger.

• Slang and colloquial expressions
  The journal article sucked/was pretty awful…
  The journal article was poorly researched…
Being cautious and objective

Use the following formal language features to express your opinion and attitude:

• **Nominalisation**
  
  I believe this practice can benefit…
  
  The benefits of this practice…

• **Modal verbs**
  
  Patients will/may benefit from the treatment…

• **Appropriate reporting verbs**
  
  Jacob (1998) says that the test is not 100% reliable.
  
  According to Jacob (1998), the test is not 100% reliable.
  
  Jacob (1998) concedes that the test is not 100% reliable.

• **Tentative language**
  
  …suggests that…there is a tendency for…it would seem that…it is probable…the majority of…
Evidence and referencing

In-text citations

• Information-prominent citation:
  The theory was first propounded in 1970 (Larsen 1971), and was confirmed two decades later (Williams & Jones 1991).

• Author-prominent citation:
  Larsen (1971) was the first to propound the theory. This was subsequently investigated and confirmed by Williams and Jones (1991).
Reference list


Elements of Style

• Sentence structure: ordering of words and grammatical elements in a sentence
• Tone: intended emotional impact of a piece of writing
• Diction: specific word choices to establish a particular tone
• Unbiased language: to display objectivity
Sentence structure

• Creating **emphasis**
  Poverty is a risk factor for premature morbidity.
  One risk factor for premature morbidity is poverty.

• Creating **flow** – coherence and continuity, or the forward movement in your writing
  • **Repetition** of key words and grammatical constructions
  • Use of **connecting words** to create logical relationships
  • Placing the **main verb** as close as possible to the **subject**
    Increased vascular permeability, where the child can become hypovolaemic due to the reduction in circulating volume, occurs where the inflammatory process results in a change in permeability properties of the endothelium.
    Increased vascular permeability occurs where the inflammatory process results in a change in permeability properties of the endothelium. The child can become hypovolaemic due to the reduction in circulating volume.
  • **Parallelism**
Sentence structures

- **Simple**: The nurse assesses the circulation of the child by examining cardiovascular status.

- **Compound**: The nurse assesses the circulation of the child by examining cardiovascular status, and the nurse also looks for effects of insufficient circulation on other organs.

- **Complex**: Although a child’s heart rate can be obtained by a probe, this does not tell the nurse if the pulse is thready, bounding, regular or irregular.

- **Compound-complex**: Although a child’s heart rate can be obtained by a probe, this does not tell the nurse if the pulse is thready, bounding, regular or irregular, and thus she or he needs to take a manual pulse rate.
Tone and diction

- Writing can sound neutral, happy, angry, intimate, concerned, or any other emotion.
  My patient had a supportive family which consisted of her husband and two adolescent children.
  I was amazed at the bond my patient shared with her loving husband and two teenage kids.
- You as a writer make specific word choices to convey a particular tone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Colloquial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Finished</td>
<td>Over with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examined</td>
<td>Looked at</td>
<td>Eyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicament</td>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>A real bind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serendipitous</td>
<td>Fortunate</td>
<td>Stroke of good luck</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unbiased language

• Synonyms can be different in subtle yet important ways, depending on their denotation and connotation.
  • Patient vs. client
  • Subject vs. participant
• Avoid embedded assumptions
  • Manpower vs. staff/human resources
  • Any nurse performing this procedure should protect her hands.
• Be specific
  • Everyone vs. interviewees in the 18-21 age bracket
• Be respectful
  • In identifying racial and ethnic groups, avoid broad labels.
  • Only include identifiers of disability, sexual orientation, age, or racial/ethnic identity if they are relevant.
Ways to develop your writing style

You will learn more about the following as we go through the activity sheet:

• Be clear
• Be concise
• Be precise
HELPS services and programs:

- Daily workshops
- Assignment advice
  - 15-min drop-in consultation
  - 40-min one-to-one consultation by referral
- WriteNow! Writing support sessions
- Conversations@UTS
- HELPS Volunteers and Mentors
- Self-help resources
- Holiday intensive workshops
Contact us

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