



Learn. To Change.

## ACE Workshop: **Academic Style**

**Please note: these workshops are interactive!**

Message the lecturer if you are unable to unmute your microphone during the session.

**Session will start at: 00:00**

## Academic Style: Workshop Content

Explain the purpose of writing in an academic style at university

Apply six important academic conventions to improve academic style

Modify an example paragraph and describe improvements in academic style

**By the end of the lesson you will be able to:**

Write confidently in an academic style when undertaking assignments

# Why is academic style important in your assignments?

The conventions of academic style encourage students to **communicate** their **arguments clearly and succinctly** – signposting where and how the assessment criteria have been fulfilled.

This can result in:

- Improved grades
- The development of critical thinking skills

The following conventions are followed to produce successful university assignments and scholarly publications:

1

Formality

2

Precision

3

Objectivity

4

Concision

5

Caution

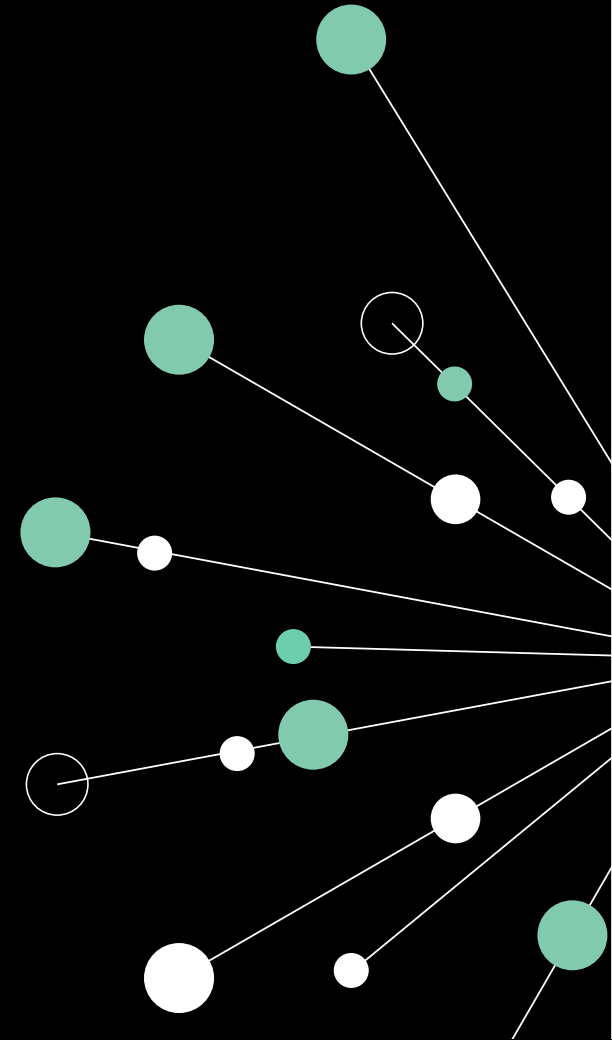
6

Structure



**Part 1**

# **Formality, Precision and Objectivity**



## Task

Match the conventions to the definitions

1

Formality

**A**

To convey information with **accuracy**, incorporating **relevant detail** such as facts, statistics, and **discipline-specific vocabulary**.

2

Precision

**B**

To use **impartial** language which is not personal, judgemental, or emotive. To **avoid exaggeration** or bias, **respecting the views of others**.

3

Objectivity

**C**

To communicate in **standard English**, **avoiding colloquialisms** and the first person (unless told otherwise!).



Match the conventions to the definitions

1

Formality

C

To communicate in **standard English**, **avoiding colloquialisms** and the first person (unless told otherwise!).

2

Precision

A

To convey information with **accuracy**, incorporating **relevant detail** such as facts, statistics, and **discipline-specific vocabulary**.

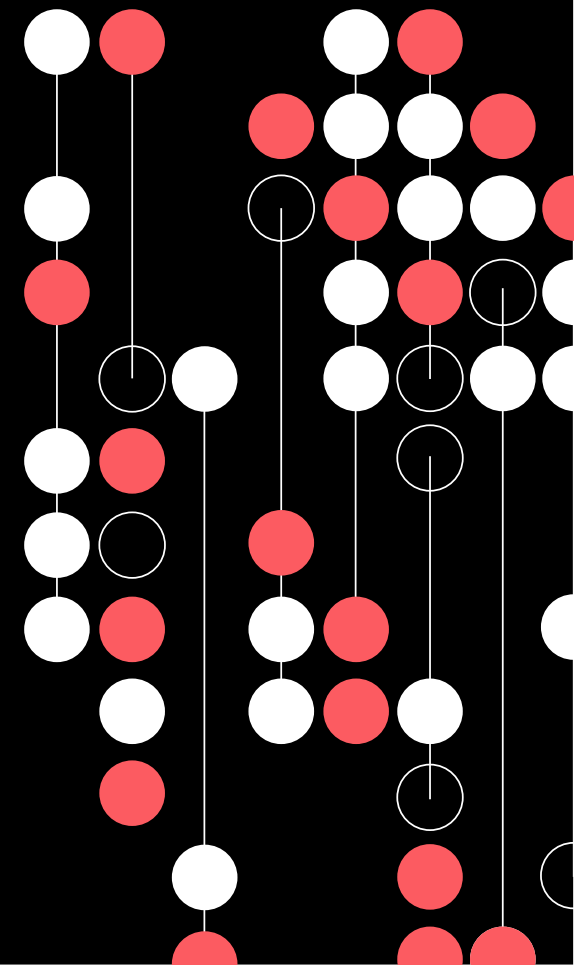
3

Objectivity

B

To use **impartial** language which is not personal, judgemental, or emotive. To **avoid exaggeration** or bias, **respecting the views of others**.

# 1. Formality





## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Uses colloquialisms such as 'boss' or 'newbie'.

## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Uses idioms like 'cut corners' and 'easier said than done'.

## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Avoids contractions, including 'isn't' and 'didn't'.

## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Uses 'get / go' phrases such as 'get better' or 'get worse'.

## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Avoids multi-word verbs like 'take place' or 'bring together'.

## Formality True or false?

### Formal academic language...



Uses question forms. For example, 'What factors contributed to the decrease in employee wellbeing?'



## Formality

Academic writing requires a higher level of formality and differs from typical spoken English in many ways.

### Formal academic Language...

- ⊗ Uses colloquialisms such as 'boss' or 'newbie'.
- ⊗ Uses idioms like 'cut corners' and 'easier said than done'.
- ✓ Avoids contractions, including 'isn't' and 'didn't'.
- ⊗ Uses 'get / go' phrases such as 'get better' or 'get worse'.
- ✓ Avoids multi-word verbs like 'take place' or 'bring together'.
- ⊗ Uses question forms. For example, 'What factors contributed to the decrease in employee wellbeing?'

## Formality

In your assignments, you should avoid multi-word verbs and phrasal verbs.

### Task

Can you think of more concise academic alternatives for examples 1 – 6 below?

Carry on	<b>Continue</b>
Get bigger	<b>Increase</b>
Bring together	<b>Integrate</b>
Bring into	<b>Introduce</b>
Take place	<b>Occur</b>
Stay the same	<b>Maintain</b>

Leave out	<b>1) Omit</b>
Sort out	<b>2) Organise</b>
Take part	<b>3) Participate</b>
Come before	<b>4) Precede</b>
Give a speech	<b>5) Present</b>
Put forward	<b>6) Propose</b>



## Formality

Consider the differences between the examples below:



- 1 As children **get older**, they **get really aware** of their social background.
- 2 The brains of **teens aren't** yet fully developed.
- 3 This assignment will **talk about big** issues affecting the digital communications industry.
- 4 **But what is the Fourth Industrial Revolution?**



- As children **develop**, they **become more aware** of their social background.
- The brains of **adolescents are not yet** fully developed.
- This assignment will **discuss key** issues affecting the digital communications industry.
- The Fourth Industrial Revolution is...**

## Formality

### Task

Identify and correct the informalities.



While Smith's (2023) investigation backs up these findings, Taylor (2024) says they should be taken with a pinch of salt.

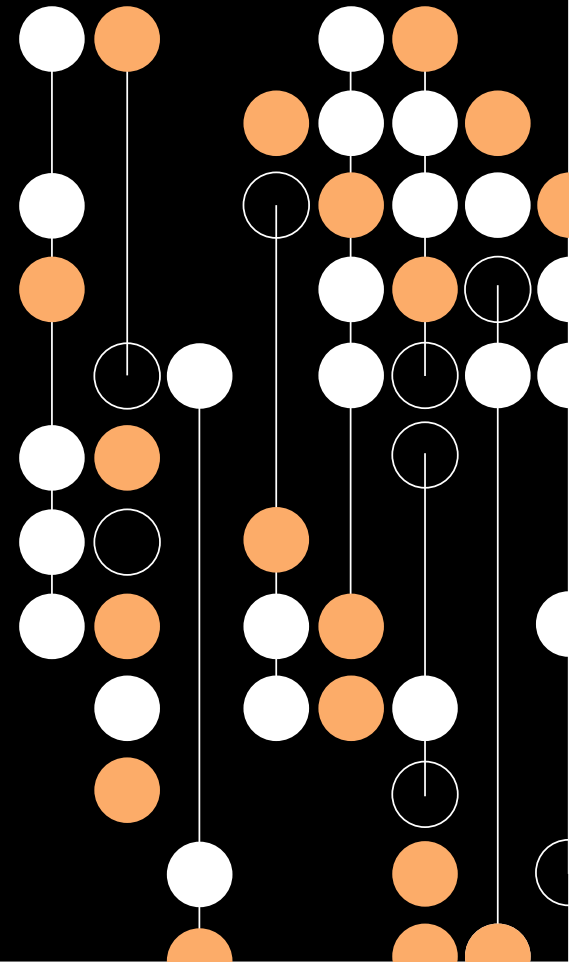


While Smith's (2023) investigation **backs up** these findings, Taylor (2024) says they **should be taken with a pinch of salt**.



While Smith's (2023) investigation **supports** these findings, Taylor (2024) **identifies potential limitations**.

## 2. Precision



## Precision

Task

Which of the following examples is best? Why?

A

Employees at Organisation x do not like long meetings as they always tune out half-way through.

B

85% of employees at Organisation x reported preferring meetings under one hour (Appendix A), to enhance engagement and the retention of new information (Soady, 2024).

C

85% of employees at Organisation x testified to a penchant for meetings comprising a maximum solitary hour in duration (Appendix A), for facilitation and optimisation of oft-lacking communal partaking and the efficacious assimilation of freshly acquired information (Soady, 2024).

## Precision

To write with precision involves:



A high level of **detail** and **specificity** - integrating relevant facts, statistics, and discipline-specific vocabulary.



Making deliberate linguistic choices, which do not allow for misinterpretation.

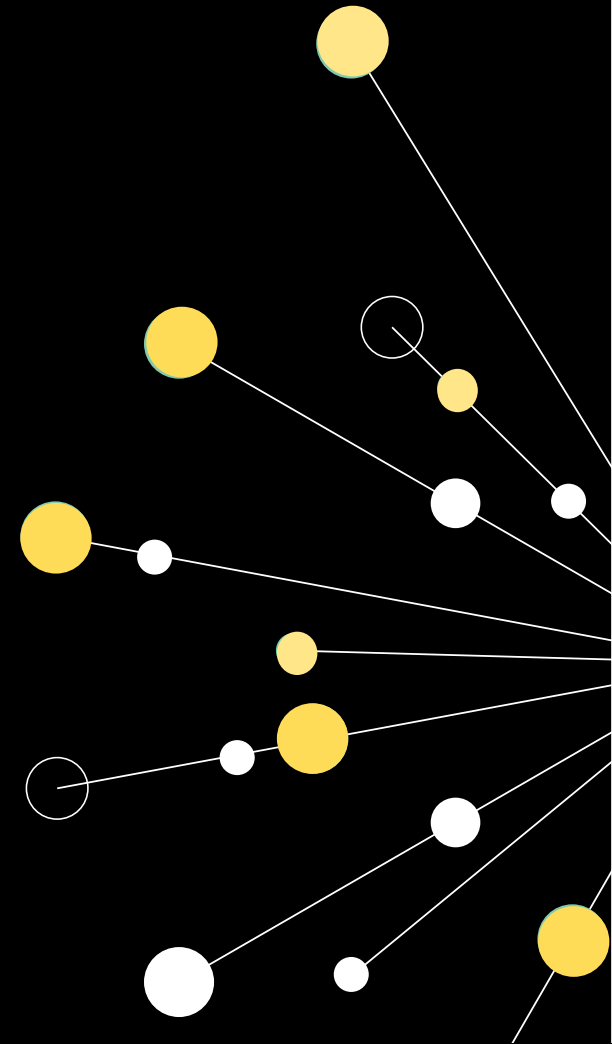


Incorporating citations and appendices, using scholarly resources and internal company documentation to evidence your arguments.

TIP!

Do not confuse precision with writing in an artificial 'overly-academic' style. Your writing should still be **clear** and **easy to understand!**

# 3. Objectivity



## Objectivity

**Academic writing is objective and impersonal. When writing about your own experiences, use language which is not personal, judgemental, or emotive.**

Is this excerpt from a reflective section objective?



It was a total waste of time attending the leadership course as the instructor was really condescending and I knew everything already. As such, I felt absolutely demotivated and did not want to continue on the project.

How might you change the text to make it more objective?

## Objectivity



It was a total waste of time attending the leadership course as the instructor was really condescending and I knew everything already. As such, I felt absolutely demotivated and did not want to continue on the project.



**Below is an improved example**

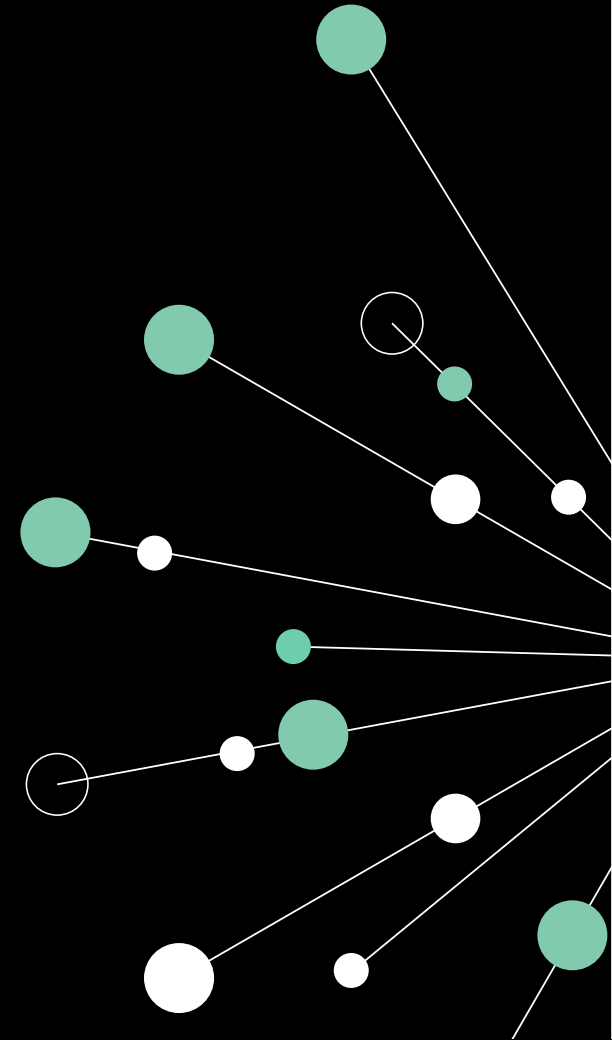


Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities should be selected carefully as unsuitable training is likely to demotivate an employee instead of equipping them with valuable skills for the workplace (Campbell, 2023).



**Part 2**

# **Concision, Caution and Structure**



## Task

Match the conventions to the definitions

4

Concision

**A**

To express varying degrees of certainty or uncertainty. Otherwise known as hedging language.

5

Caution

**B**

To convey information effectively in as few words as possible.

6

Structure

**C**

To arrange information in a logical and comprehensible sequence.

Match the conventions to the definitions

4

Concision

B

To convey information effectively in as **few words as possible**.

5

Caution

A

To express **varying degrees** of certainty or **uncertainty**. Otherwise known as hedging language.

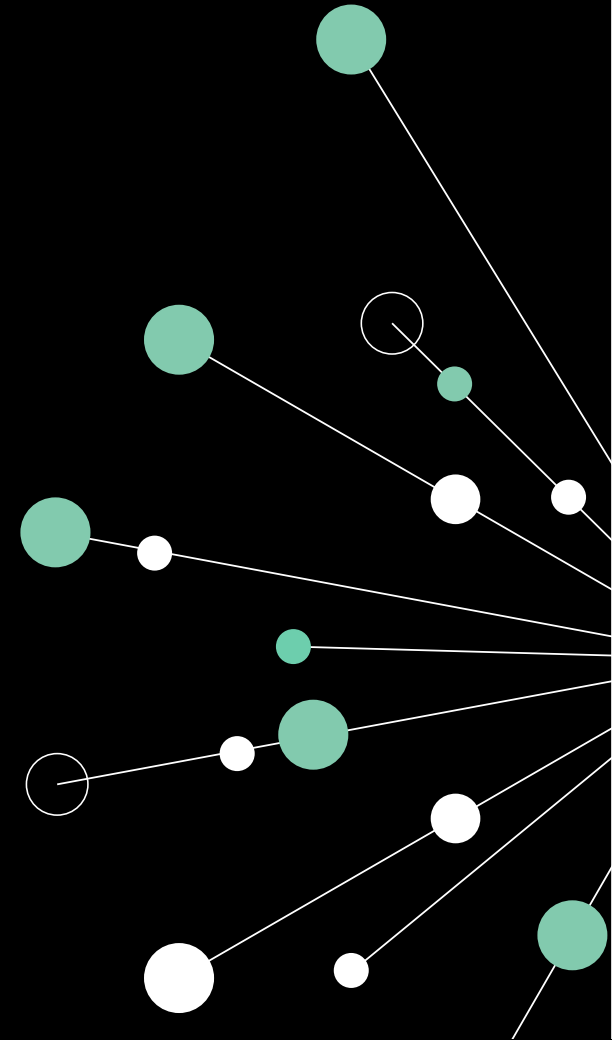
6

Structure

C

To arrange information in a **logical** and **comprehensible sequence**.

## 4. Concision



## Concision

**Long, complex sentences can be difficult to understand, waste word count and distract the reader from your point. Avoid repeating the same idea in more than one sentence.**

### Task

Identify problems areas within this academic sentence



The thing about AI that is important to note is the way in which the company itself discusses its own in-depth AI research papers and other areas too such as open-source tools that the company has spent its own time on developing.

## Concision

The sentence lacks concision which impacts the structure and clarity of meaning.



**The thing about AI that is important to note** is the **way in which** the company **itself** discusses its **own in-depth** AI research papers and **other areas too such as** open-source tools that the company has **spent its own time on** developing.

Task

Apply academic conventions to rewrite the sentence

## Concision



**The thing about AI that is important to note** is the **way in which** the company **itself** discusses its **own in-depth** AI research papers and **other areas too such as** open-source tools that the company has **spent its own time on** developing.



**Below is an example of an improved sentence**



Meta AI heavily features the company's own AI research, including research papers and open-source AI tools it has developed.



## Concision

TIP!

Avoid using unnecessary adverbs or phrases in your assignments.

Common unnecessary adverbs	Common unnecessary phrases
totally, completely, remarkably, surprisingly	In my opinion... As to whether...
absolutely, definitely, certainly	It is important to note... Due to the fact...
probably, actually, basically, virtually	In order to... In spite of the fact...
rather, quite, somehow, perhaps	In the event that... It goes to show...
possibly, commonly	It is possible that... For the purpose of...



## Concision

Choose a sentence to re-write in a more concise manner

1. **For the purpose of** implementing a new project management methodology, Agile is **extremely** beneficial.
2. **In the group's opinion,** the results were **highly** inconclusive **due to the fact that** inaccuracies **were found** in the data.
3. **In spite of the fact that** AI is a powerful new technology, **it is important to note that** it is **successfully** driving cybercrime.
4. **There have been many** discussions among researchers which support **the fact that** excessive screen time **severely** impacts health.
5. **Needless to say,** the project was **actually** delayed, **due to the fact** that dedicated resource was **very** limited.

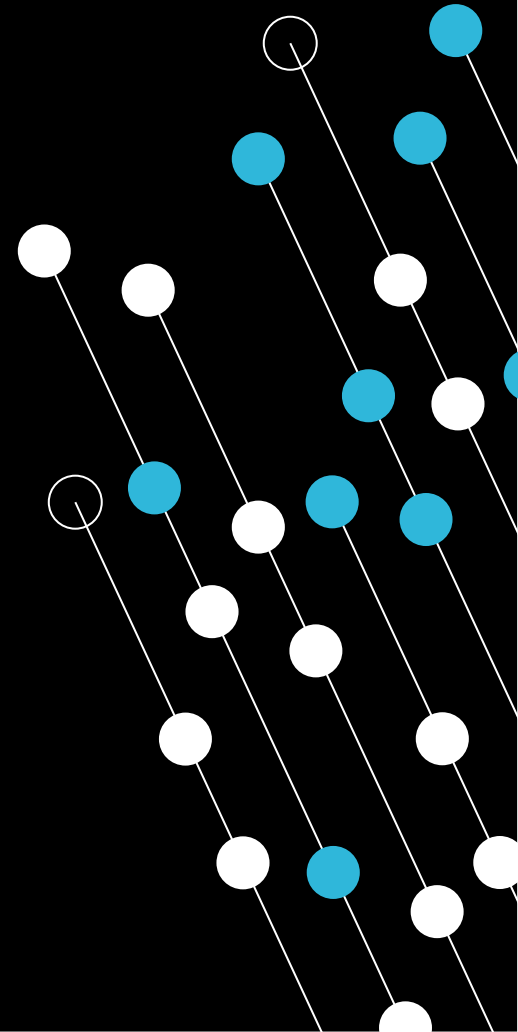
## Concision

Unnecessary word or phrase	Possible revision
<b>Due to the fact</b> the meeting was cancelled...	<b>As</b> the meeting was cancelled...
<b>As to whether</b> the company decides...	<b>Whether</b> the company decides...
<b>In the event that</b> the deadline is not met...	<b>If</b> the deadline is not met...
<b>In order to</b> understand the impact of...	<b>To</b> understand the impact of...
<b>In spite of the fact that...</b>	<b>Despite</b> the fact...

**TIP!**

Omit unnecessary words and phrases or use more concise alternatives in your assignments.

## 5. Caution and 6. Structure



## Caution

Task

Which of the following examples is best? Why?

A

Yen (2005) **proves conclusively** that extensive reading **always** helps students to improve their vocabulary.

B

Yen (2005) **suggests** that, for a **significant proportion** of students, extensive reading **may contribute** to an improvement in their active vocabulary.

TIP!

In academic writing, an author may not be convinced by the claims being made in their subject area, or perhaps the ideas require further evidence. It is therefore common to use the language of **caution** or uncertainty (known as **hedging** language).



## Caution

Language of caution or uncertainty can be used for different purposes. Below are some examples of language to use when making claims.

Appearance	Possibility	Frequency	Quantifiers	Evidence	Reporting Verbs
There appears to be ...	Can, could, may, might	Sometimes, rarely	Some...	Based on ...	Other studies suggest...
It seems to be...	...has the potential to...	tends to...	a fraction	As indicated by ...	Research argues...
This is similar to...	...is able to...	has a tendency to...	The minority /majority of...	According to ...	Liu et al. (2024) claim that ...
	...has the possibility of...		A proportion of		
			To some extent		

## Caution

Consider the differences between the examples below

	⊗	✔
1	<b>All</b> studies show that AI <b>will improve</b> process efficiencies in the workplace.	<b>Many</b> studies demonstrate AI <b>has the potential to</b> improve process efficiencies in the workplace.
2	<b>All the evidence</b> shows that employee wellbeing <b>is essential</b> to staff retention.	<b>Studies suggest</b> employee wellbeing <b>tends to</b> impact staff retention.
3	Research <b>shows</b> that data driven decision making <b>will always</b> enhance a company's commercial success.	<b>Research suggests</b> data driven decision making <b>may</b> enhance a company's commercial success.

## Caution

### Task

Re-write the sentence in a more cautious manner



The results clearly show that all employees will benefit from CPD training.



The results **clearly** show that **all** employees **will** benefit from CPD training.



According to the results **a significant proportion** of employees **could** benefit from CPD training.

## Caution

### Task

Re-write the sentence in a more cautious manner



Notetaking during lectures will always aid memory retention.



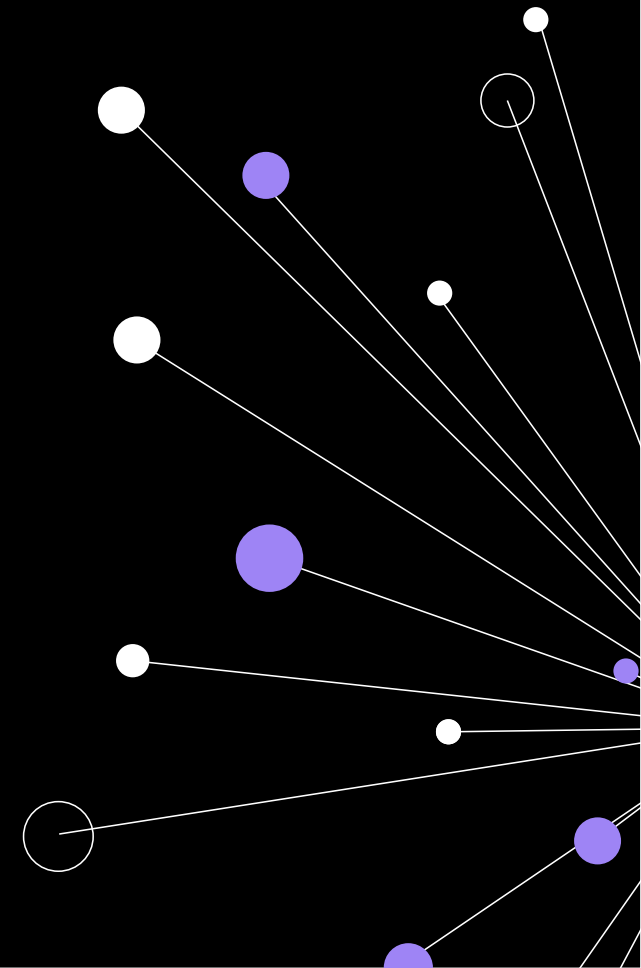
Notetaking during lectures **will always** aid memory retention.



Notetaking during lectures **appears to** aid memory retention in **some** learners.



# Conventions in practice



## Task

Identify problem areas within this 'academic' paragraph

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.

Formality

Precision

Objectivity

Concision

Caution

Structure

## Formality

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.

## Precision

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.

## Objectivity

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.

## Concision

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.

## Caution

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they **should be able to** sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, **it's obvious** that some colleagues **will** take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you **will** upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's **very difficult** to be a leader.

## Task

Choose a sentence from this paragraph to rewrite in a more academic style

Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it. It's not fair if some colleagues aren't pulling their weight and if your manager is an authority figure they should be able to sort this out. If you aren't strong enough, it's obvious that some colleagues will take advantage. But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people. Which of these is right? You have to make your own mind up, I guess. It's very difficult to be a leader.



## Structure

### Improved example:



Lots of people say that leadership is really important for teams being good at collaborating, and you shouldn't underestimate it.



The importance of effective leadership in fostering collaborative environments within sales teams has been widely noted (Calvin, 2022; Seath, 2024).

## Structure

### Improved example:

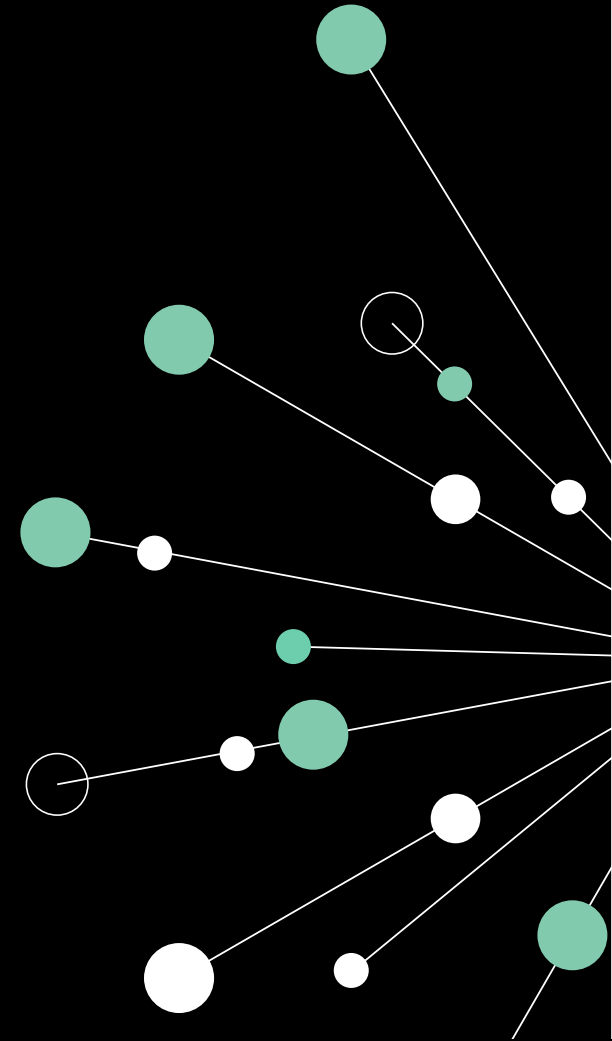


But I suppose that you can't go too far, or you will upset people.



An authoritarian leadership style was deemed least popular in a survey of colleagues (Appendix A).

# Review



## Academic Style - Review



You should convey information using as many words as possible



## Academic Style - Review



Writing with precision involves a high level of detail – incorporating relevant citations and discipline-specific vocabulary

## Academic Style - Review



You should use contractions to reduce your word count

## ACE Feedback

Thank you for attending this ACE Workshop.  
We would be grateful if you could take 2 minutes to  
complete our **feedback form**.

# ACE resources related to this topic

- [Academic Writing Essentials - Quick Guide](#)
- [Coherence - Quick Guide](#)
- [Writing Concisely - Quick Guide](#)
- [Hedging - Quick Guide](#)
- [Reporting Verbs - Quick Guide](#)





## Do you require further academic support?

Look on the  
ACE Page for  
resources

Check out our  
upcoming  
workshops

Book a 1-2-1  
tutorial



**Any questions?**