

ACE Quick Guide to Academic Writing Essentials

Academic writing refers to any formal written work produced in an academic setting.

Academic writing has **several key features** which are introduced below.

1

A wide range of reading and sources



- Start with lecture slides, lecture notes, resources on your VLE and set texts on your module reading list.
- Use the library services and open access databases such as Google Scholar to search for further academic sources.
- Ensure the sources you use are **reliable** and **credible**.

2

Accurate citations and reference list



- Include in-text citations and a reference list.
- Download your Referencing Guide from the ACE Tile on Canvas. All programmes (except Solent) should download the **QA Apprenticeships Full Referencing Guide**. Solent University DMDA learners should download the **Solent University Harvard Referencing Guide**.

3

Formal language



Avoid using the following:

- Personal pronouns, e.g. I or we (unless otherwise instructed by your tutor for specific sections).
- Slang, colloquialisms or company jargon which is not defined.
- Contractions, e.g. don't, won't, couldn't.
- Rhetorical questions.

4

Well-structured and easy to navigate



- Use headings and sub-headings if instructed.
- Break your writing up into clear topic paragraphs.
- Make clear links between paragraphs.
- Use connectives to link ideas together, e.g. subsequently, alternatively, consequently, firstly, finally etc.

5

Objective



- Write in third person (unless otherwise instructed by your tutor).
- Ensure your points and arguments are based on facts and evidence (both work-based and academic).
- **Avoid** exaggeration.
- **Avoid** using emotive and dramatic language.

6

Relevant



- Ensure you are answering the assignment question and discussing the subject-matter identified in your assignment brief.
- Refer to your assignment brief regularly during the writing process.
- Be selective about the information you include.
- **Avoid** including unnecessary background detail.

7

Balanced and analytical



- Include a wide range of different perspectives.
- Provide counterarguments and alternative points of view.
- Consider the extent to which you believe an author's arguments to be true and relate this to your specific organisational context.

8

Cautious



- Use cautious language (also known as 'hedging'). This helps distinguish between facts and claims. It ensures your writing is more credible, well-informed and scholarly.
- **Avoid** making bold claims without evidence to support them.

9

Well-written, accurate, and clear



- Ensure your spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.
- Use clear, well-structured sentences. **Avoid** writing lengthy sentences over 3 lines long.
- Proofread your assignment when you have completed the write up.

Additional Resources

This is an **introductory guide** to the **key principles** of academic writing. You can find further resources on all points covered in this guide on the Canvas ACE Tile. You may find the following useful:

The [ACE Quick Guide to Use of Sources](#) examines how to synthesise source material into an academic argument and contains a phrase bank for engaging with scholarly ideas.

The [ACE Quick Guide to Academic Reading Strategies](#) explores different ways of engaging with scholarly texts to ensure you maximise your self-study time.

The [ACE Quick Guide to Hedging](#) provides further advice on using cautious language.

The [ACE Quick Guide to Editing and Proofreading](#) includes a checklist which can be used to assess your work prior to submission.

The [QA Apprenticeships Harvard Referencing Guide](#) (all university partners except Solent) includes information on how to produce accurate in-text citations and reference list entries.

The [Solent Harvard Referencing Guide](#) (Solent University only) includes information on how to produce accurate in-text citations and reference list entries.



[QA.com](https://qa.com)