

Appendix 4

Writing in an academic style

Points A–D below are some general principles to help you write in a style appropriate for academic writing.

A Use formal rather than informal language

1 Avoid contracted forms:

- *mustn't* > **must not**
- *it's* > **it is**

2 Avoid colloquial language ('spoken' language):

- *The results from a lot of many of these recent projects have been pretty good encouraging.*

3 Avoid punctuation indicating your attitude:

- *Turnout in the election was less than 20 percent!*
→ **Disappointingly/Surprisingly**, turnout in the election was less than 20 percent.

B Be concise and precise

4 In general, use a one-word verb where we might prefer a phrasal verb in speech:

- *The issue was brought up raised during the meeting.*

5 Avoid vague words common in speech such as *big* (*bigger, biggest*), *good*, *thing*, and *nice*:

- *Government policy has a big major/significant/important impact on the way business is conducted.*

6 Avoid *etc.*, and *so on*, and *and so forth* where it would be better to provide a full list or summarise the features of the items in the list:

- *Elements in the periodic table can be divided into metals, non-metals, etc. metals, non-metals, and metalloids (semi-metals).*

7 Consider nominalisation to express ideas efficiently:

- *The number of cases is increasing and this is causing great concern among health authorities.*
→ **The increase in the number of cases is causing great concern among health authorities.**

C Use impersonal language

8 Avoid using *I* (*me, my, mine*) or *we* (*our, ours*) (referring to yourself) to express an opinion:

- *I think it is likely that mobile phone technology will be used increasingly in education.*

Note, that *I* is often used when a writer talks about how they are organising their writing, or the procedures followed in their research:

- *In the next section I will go on to demonstrate that ...*
- *I first analysed their ability to solve the problems.*

9 Avoid addressing the reader as *you* or *the reader*:

- *You can see the results in Table 3.*
→ **The results are shown in Table 3.**
- *The reader should note two important assumptions.*
→ **Two important assumptions should be noted.**

D Be cautious in what you say

10 Avoid generalisations:

- *Nowadays everyone has there is widespread access to the internet.*

11 Avoid words that express your emotion rather than show evidence:

- *It is ridiculous to think that debatable whether the problems can be solved by economic means.*

12 Use hedges to qualify your statements:

- *In Australia, beef cattle are found are mostly found in Queensland and New South Wales.*
- *The virus is appears to be widespread in central Asia.*