



Handout 2

FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING AND ASSOCIATED LANGUAGE

Academic writing is linear and uses language precisely and accurately. There are eight main features of academic writing.

Feature	Language
Complexity Written language is relatively more complex than spoken language. Written language has longer words, is lexically denser and is grammatically more complex.	Main difference is grammar – passive is used extensively.
Formality Academic writing is relatively formal.	Colloquial words and expressions should be avoided as should abbreviated forms eg can't.
Precision In academic writing, facts and figures are given precisely.	Avoid expressions like 'a lot of', 'hundreds', 'approximately'.
Objectivity Written language is, in general, objective rather than personal.	The main emphasis is on information that you want to give and the arguments you want to make, rather than on you, the writer. For that reason, academic writing tends to use nouns and adjectives, rather than verbs and adverbs.

<p>Explicitness</p> <p>Academic writing in English requires clarity with respect to how the various parts of an academic text fit together.</p>	<p>Connections within a text can be made explicit by the use of different signaling words such as 'however', 'because', 'similarly', 'in addition'.</p>
<p>Accuracy</p> <p>Academic writing requires vocabulary and grammar to be used accurately.</p>	<p>Grammar and parts of speech need to be used accurately (eg 'conducted research' not 'did a research'). Meaning needs to be conveyed accurately (eg 'article', 'novel' and 'book' are very different).</p>
<p>Hedging</p> <p>Academic writing requires that you take a stance on a particular subject, or on the strength of the claims you are making.</p>	<p>In doing this, however, you need to be cautious with respect to the language that you use. Useful phrases include, 'it could be the case that', 'it seems that', 'it may be possible to' etc.</p>
<p>Responsibility</p> <p>In academic writing you must be responsible for, and be able to provide evidence and justification for, any claims you make. You are also responsible for demonstrating an understanding of any source texts you use.</p>	<p>Paraphrasing, summarizing and synthesizing are required. In addition, appropriate referencing and citation must be used.</p>

Adapted from: Gillett, A. 2014. *Using English for Academic Purposes*.
<http://www.uefap.com/index.htm>