

THE RULES SHOULD BE MEMORISED

PRIOR TO WRITING ACADEMIC ESSAYS

Rule 01: Avoid using contractions or abbreviations. (Ex. Use *can not* instead of *can't*)

Avoid contracted auxiliary verbs and negatives. These are very common in informal speech and writing, but are considered inappropriate in academic writing.

Non-academic: I don't think that I'm working hard.

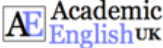
Academic: I do not think that I am working hard.

For example: *can't, couldn't, wouldn't, didn't, I'll, I've, I'd, won't*, etc...

Note that "cannot" is one word.

Do not use abbreviations or symbols.

Spell the words out. Ex: & = and; dept. = department

NO Idiomatich / colloquial (slang) <i>Kids / boss / gonna / stuff</i>	NO number / bullet points NO vague language <i>And so on.. / etc...</i>	YES Passive structures <i>We analysed the data / The data was analysed</i>
NO Phrasal verbs <i>Go up / look up</i>	NO Repetition <i>Constant repeating same words</i>	YES –Academic Vocabulary <i>See A.W.L</i>
NO Personal Pronouns <i>I, we, In my opinion (limit use)</i>	Academic Style	YES – Referencing systems YES Complex Grammar structures <i>Nominalisation / noun structures</i>
NO Contractions <i>It'll = it will / It's = it is</i>		YES Caution / hedging – tentative language <i>Possibly / seems / appears / could / may</i>
NO Questions <i>So why did the project fail?</i>		YES Accurate vocabulary <i>Difference between law / rule</i>
NO Personal adverbs <i>Surprisingly / fortunately</i>		YES Precise facts / figures <i>A few years ago / in 2014</i>
	No basic language <i>Like – for example</i> <i>Thing – factor</i> <i>Lots of – significant amount</i> <i>Little/big – large</i> <i>Get - obtain</i> <i>Hard - difficult</i> <i>Good/bad – positive / negative</i> <i>Amazing / wonderful - important</i>	

Rule 02: Use third person voice or impersonal language.

(Ex. *One can interpret...* instead of *You can interpret...*)

In other words, **the impersonal language** should be used. Most formal writing aims to establish an air of objectivity and impartiality, an air with which the personal pronouns *I*, *me*, and *my* seem inconsistent. In truth, objectivity results from proper use of evidence and logic rather than pronoun choices, but there is something to be said for *seeming* as well as *being* objective. Moreover, some professors prohibit their students from using first-person pronouns as a kind of discipline: many students do inject personal opinions and unexamined assumptions where persuasiveness demands objective evidence, and prohibiting personal pronouns seems to help curb this tendency.

The convention in much academic writing is to write with minimal reference to yourself as an author. The reason for this lies in a tradition of needing to present your work "objectively", as the work of a dispassionate and disinterested (that is, **unbiased**) researcher. So, one of the features of academic writing is a general absence of the first person pronoun "I". This can be difficult, as lecturers often say, "tell me what you think". Well, they do want to know what you think, but presented as a **rational, objective** argument. For this reason we also avoid using emotive language; instead we let the "facts" - or our reasoned argument - make the point for us.

It is important to note that while the avoidance of "I" has long been part of the academic tradition, these days some academics consider its use to be acceptable. So, you may encounter different views about the use of "I" over the course of your degree. In any case, you will need to develop the flexibility in your writing to play down the "personal element". Your lecturer, Cathi Lewis, for example, has stated that she prefers undergraduates to avoid the use of "I" in Introduction to Sociology (See the Lecturer's Advice section of this tutorial). Regardless of your

particular lecturer's views, you will need to learn how to use "I" sparingly. So let's look at how we can write passages without reference to the first person pronoun.

Avoid personal "I", "you", and "we", except for the thesis statement. So, instead of: "As I mentioned above...", write "As was mentioned above..." except for the thesis statement. So, instead of: "As I mentioned above...", write "As was mentioned above..."

There are several ways to avoid using the first person pronoun "I":

One way is to let the assignment "speak for itself": for example,

"I show..." becomes **"The report shows..."**

"I interpret the results as..." becomes **"The results indicate..."**

Another way to avoid the first person is to use the **passive voice** construction:

Instead of	write
"We administered the questionnaire..." (active voice)	"The questionnaire was administered..." (passive voice)
"I surveyed the literature" (active voice)	"The literature was surveyed" (passive voice)
"I took a sample..."	"A sample was taken"

Rule 03: Be sure to use transitions between points, within a paragraph.

Use appropriate linking words/phrases to show the links between paragraph, as well as to link sentences within paragraphs. Do not use simple linking words (e.g. and, but, so) except for variety.

Conjunctions: avoid weak conjunctions such as "but." This is a VERY weak word with which to begin sentence. Look in the thesaurus for others, such as "however," "moreover," "nevertheless," "nonetheless" "regardless," etc. Although it is grammatically correct to begin sentences with "And", "Or", and "Because," you should be careful and avoid doing this because many students do not do so correctly.

- Coordinating Conjunctions (and, but, or, yet, so):

Put a comma before these conjunctions. (Don't use them at the beginning of a sentence in more formal writing.)

example: The movie has already started, **but** my friend has not arrived yet.

- Correlative Conjunctions (These have two parts: either . . . or):

* Put a comma before the second part if it connects 2 clauses (complete sentences).

example: Eric is **not only** an outstanding teacher, **but** he is **also** a gourmet cook.

* You don't need a comma if it only connects words or phrases.

example: Eric is **not only** an outstanding teacher **but also** a gourmet cook.

- Transitional Words and Phrases:

* Put a comma after these if they are at the beginning of a sentence.

example: *I like to travel. Specifically, I enjoy places with old cathedrals.*

* Use a semicolon to connect the two sentences.

example: *I like to travel; specifically, I enjoy places with old cathedrals.*

* Use a comma before and after the transitional word/phrase in the middle of a clause.

example: *I like to travel, and, specifically, I enjoy places with old cathedrals.*

Some Common English Transition Words and Phrases

Adding Information	Examples
and not only . . . but also also moreover (more formal) furthermore (more formal) in addition (more formal)	We have seen the movie twice, and now we want to see it again. Not only did my brother break his leg, but he also bruised his rib. My friend speaks Korean and English. She also speaks Chinese. Cheating is dishonest. Moreover , it hinders students from learning. Students should be on time. Furthermore , they must be prepared. You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. In addition , you must do the exercises on page 47.
Giving Examples	Examples
for example for instance specifically in particular The first (second, another, etc.) example/reason is . . .	I have been to many countries. For example , I have been to Russia, Canada, Mexico, and Spain. He often eats strange foods. For instance , he once ate cow brains. I like to travel. Specifically , I enjoy places with old cathedrals. I love fruit. In particular , I like bananas, pineapple, and berries. My friend hates skiing for several reasons. The first reason is that she dislikes being cold. Another reason is that she often falls.
Showing a Contrast	Examples
but however	Bill earned an A on his essay, but Susan got a B. We wanted to leave at 8:00. However , Mike arrived too late.
on the other hand otherwise instead in contrast (more formal)	She hates housecleaning. On the other hand , she doesn't mind cooking. Students should attend class. Otherwise , they may lose their status. I am not going out tonight. Instead , I will stay home and watch a video. Women usually enjoy shopping. In contrast , men often dislike it.
Showing a Concession	Examples
yet nevertheless (more formal) even so however although even though despite the fact that . . . despite	He knows that he should do his homework, yet he never does it. I need to wear reading glasses. Nevertheless , I hate how I look in them. I know you don't like to study. Even so , you must pass your exam. There are many benefits to exercising. However , you must take some precautions to avoid injury. Even though the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting. Although the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting. Despite the fact that Kate is good at tennis, she lost the match. Despite Kate's skill at tennis, she lost the match.
Showing a Similarity	Examples
likewise (more formal) similarly (more formal) in the same way	Math was hard for me in high school. Likewise , it is hard in college. Houseplants require much care and attention. Similarly , outdoor plants must be cared for properly. Rock climbing takes much practice and skill. In the same way , learning to write well requires a great deal of practice.
Showing a Result	Examples
so as a result therefore thus (more formal) as a consequence consequently (more formal)	Janet passed her exam, so she is very happy. Tim was late. As a result , we could not go to the concert. James is not feeling well. Therefore , he will not be here today. The committee voted against the proposal. Thus , we must consider another idea. I forgot that the cake was in the oven. As a consequence , it burned. Tina lost her keys. Consequently , she could not drive home.

Establishing Time Relation or Sequence first second finally in conclusion in summary meanwhile	Examples First , I think that she is studying hard. Second , I believe that she is a bright student. Finally , I know that she has great potential. In conclusion , I feel that she deserves to win the scholarship. In summary , we should offer her some financial help. Jeff was working hard to clean the house. Meanwhile , his brother was watching television.
Showing a Condition or whether . . . or if . . . (then)	Examples I must study hard, or I will fail my exam. Whether you are coming or not, I am still going to Amy's party. If you want to get good grades, then you must do your homework.
Explaining or Emphasizing in fact actually in other words namely (more formal)	Examples The bookstore sells cards. In fact , they have the best cards around. James is actually the first person I have known who has been to Africa. He was late to class again. In other words , he didn't wake up on time. The plan needed only two things to succeed— namely , time and money.
Giving an Alternative or either . . . or neither . . . nor (more formal)	Examples We can go to the beach, or we can go to the mountains. You can either ride the bus or walk to my apartment. I like neither that person nor his brother.

A) Make it plural.

<u>Sexist Language</u>	<u>Good Alternative</u>
Give each student his paper	Give students their papers
as soon as he is finished.	as soon as they are finished.
The average student is	The average student is
worried about his grade.	worried about grades.

<u>Usually Inappropriate</u>	<u>Good Alternatives</u>
mankind	humanity, people, human beings
man• fs achievements	human achievements
man-made	synthetic, manufactured, machine-made
the common man	the average person, ordinary people
man the ship	staff the ship
six man-hours	six staff-hours
chairman	coordinator (of a committee or department), moderator (of a meeting), presiding officer, head, chair
businessman	business executive
fireman	firefighter
mailman	mailcarrier
steward and stewardess	flight attendant
policeman and policewoman	police officer
congressman	congressional representative

Rule 07: Avoid repetition.

Do not use the same word or the same sentence structure too frequently.

Repetition means that the same lexical item in several sentences subsequent to its first occurrence is repeated. For example, in this section, the phrase "lexical cohesion" is repeated more than twice. In addition, repetition helps to reinforce key ideas and new terms. However, the overuse of repetition in academic writing results in a text which sounds monotonous, i.e., it does not invite the reader to read it since it contains a lot of repetitions. This problem can be overcome by shifting the position of the repeated items in the sentence.

Use rich vocabulary: You have learned English for many years and this is the time to use what you know. Stay away from over-used adjectives such as "good" or "bad". Instead, use more dramatic, expressive words, such as excellent, wonderful, superb, or adverse, horrible, terrible, etc. Choose the more precise word over the more general one. This will make your language come alive, in speech or in writing, and earn you higher marks.

Rule 08: Avoid using imperative language.

Use imperative voice sparingly in a scientific paper, because it comes across as rude (as do many of the sentences in what you are reading right now!). E.g. do not say "Recall that ...". Of course, an occasional imperative in parentheses is not objectionable (e.g. "(see Walker 1996 for more details)").

Rule 09: Be sure to use *but* and *however* correctly

(See examples of correct usage below)

- *I do not like homework, but I understand it's important.*
- *I wish I studied more; however, I still did well on the test*
- *I am sick today and will miss the test, however, this will give me more time to study.*

Rule 14: Avoid very emotional language

e.g. *I absolutely detest people who...*

Rule 15: Do not express personal opinions too strongly

e.g. *I know...*; instead, use milder expressions (e.g. *It seems to me that...* Express your opinion in a non-emotional way (e.g. *It seems that, I therefore feel*, etc.)

Rule 16: Do not use over-generalisation (e.g. All politicians are...)

Avoid:

- *Everyone knows that...*
- *What goes around comes around...*

Rule 17: Do not refer blindly to statistics without accurate reference to their source.

e.g. "A recent study showed..." - which study?)

Rule 19: Do not use personal examples

e.g. In my school...

Rule 20: Do not use colloquial language

Casual conversational language that has a wider general acceptance than slang.

Examples: - Let's do lunch.

- I'm going to get back at him.

Colloquial language is generally acceptable in casual spoken English, but it is unacceptable in formal speaking situations, and in written English.

Rule 21: Do not use metaphor

A metaphor takes a name or descriptive term and applies it to a person or object in a non-literal sense - for example, 'a glaring error', 'the heart of the matter', 'pillar of the community', 'wave of terrorism', and so on.

Rule 22: Do not use similes

A simile compares a person, action or object with something else - for example, 'fly like an eagle', 'solid as a rock', 'as happy as Larry', 'pleased as Punch', and so on.

Rule 25: Do not talk about parts of the paragraph.

☐ Do not write:

- this *paragraph* shows...
- The *topic sentence* is...
- A *quote* that proves this is...

Rule 26: Do not begin a sentence with numerals.

For example, instead of writing: "400 people..." write: "Four hundred people..."

Spell out all numbers less than 10. Ex: 6 = six Never start a sentence with a number unless you spell it out.
Ex: 15 students.... = Fifteen students ...

Use numerals 10 or above. Instead of writing: "There were 9 people...", write: "There were nine people..."

Rule 27: Do not use non-specific words.

For example: stuff, things, lots, etc...

Rule 28: Do not use ambiguous words.

For example: *this, these, his, it, they, there is, there are*, etc...

These words have no meaning in themselves, but in conversation the meaning is usually clear from the context. In written text, however, the intended meaning is quite often not evident to the reader, because there are many possible interpretations of "it" and "this".

Notes:

1. It is acceptable to use 'this', 'that', 'these', and 'those' when a noun directly afterward clarifies the meaning of the pronoun.

Eg: "This character traits ..."

2. It is acceptable to use 'it' as a preparatory subject. (See more at Rule 10)

If you want to indicate that an opinion or belief is widely held, you can use the passive form of a reporting verb with it as its impersonal subject.

It is widely believed that the standard of spoken English has declined in recent years.

The following reporting verbs are often used in this way:

accept acknowledge argue claim estimate predict

Rule 29: Do not ask rhetorical questions.

Readers want answers! So, instead of: "Do you know where the origin of tea is?" Write: "Tea originated in southern China near the border with India."

A rhetorical question is a question for which no answer is expected. A rhetorical question is one in a written text where the writer assumes the reader knows the answer, or where the writer goes on to answer the question in the text. Such questions are inappropriate for academic writing: readers might not know the answer and the point being made could be more strongly and clearly expressed as a statement. You should not risk your point being misunderstood: make your point clear and 'up front'; for example:

Informal (includes rhetorical question)	Formal
Industrial sites cause vast amounts of environmental pollution, <i>so why do we still use them?</i>	The question surrounding the continued use of industrial sites, given their vast pollution production, still remains.
<i>What is a team?</i> A team can be one person but will usually end up including many more.	A team can include one person but usually involves many more.
The question is, however, <i>does the "Design School Model" provide a practical solution to the problem of how to formulate strategy?</i>	It is questionable whether the "Design School Model" provides a practical solution to the problem of strategy formulation.

Rule 30: Write "most people", instead of the incorrect "most of people"

Likewise, "most women", "most animals", etc. But "most of **the** people" is OK.

Rule 31: Do not use the expressions *and so on* or *etc.*

Instead use *such as*.

The expression and so on is too unclear for formal writing. Thus, instead of the informal "Japan imports potatoes, corn, wheat, and so on," write "Japan imports food such as potatoes, corn and wheat."

Run on expressions include phrases such as 'and so forth', 'and so on' or 'etc'. Try to complete the sentence properly; do not use these if you can avoid them; for example:

Informal (includes run on)	Formal Alternative
Nurses must take into consideration patients' dietary needs resulting from allergies, medication, medical conditions <i>and so on</i> .	Nurses must take into consideration patients' dietary needs resulting from allergies, medication and medical conditions.
Public transport includes vehicles for public use on the roads, airways, waterways <i>etc.</i>	Public transport includes vehicles for public use, such as buses, trains and aeroplanes.

Rule 32: Place adverbs within the verb

Adverbs should be placed within the verb group rather than in the initial or final positions. In informal English, adverbs often occur as clauses at the beginning or end of sentences; for example:

Informal	Formal Alternative
<i>Then</i> the solution can be discarded.	The solution can <i>then</i> be discarded.
The blood is withdrawn <i>slowly</i> .	The blood is <i>slowly</i> withdrawn.

Rule 33: Avoid phrases such as "I believe," "I feel," and "I think."

Even worse are phrases that add an adverb, such as "I strongly believe." Your tone will be much more confident if you just make the statement without preface.

Rule 34: Avoid words that do not change the meaning of the sentence.

Unnecessary words like "Actually", "Really" or "Basically" can be omitted.

Rule 35: Do not use dialogues (conversations) in a formal essay.

For example, instead of writing: "Will you come?" You should write: He asked me if I would come.

Rule 36: Do not use informal language

- In formal English one would use the word "whom" instead of the word "who" in certain situations.

Formal: Whom did they elect?

Informal: Who did they elect?

Formal - Use 'whom' as an object: Whom have they chosen for the position?

Informal - Use 'who' as an object: Who have they chosen for the position?

Formal : With whom did you study?

Informal : Who did you study with?

In informal language prepositions often come at the end of certain structures.

Rule 37: Avoid using unnecessary words

Wordy phrases

1. it would appear that ...
2. with the exception of ...
3. in connection with ...
4. are found to be in agreement with ...
5. a large majority of ...

Using better English

1. apparently ...
2. except ...
3. about ...
4. agree ...
5. most ...

Rule 40: Do not start sentences with ‘And’, ‘Also’, ‘So’, ‘Or’, ‘Even so’, and ‘But’

Starting a sentence with them is sometimes considered inappropriate. A few decades ago it was considered totally unacceptable. Even today you can find several grammar books that advise against starting sentences with these conjunctions. However, the truth is that more and more academic writers now begin sentences with them. You must, however, make a conscious effort to avoid them just to be on the safe side.

Instead of these, use ‘In addition’, ‘However’, ‘Hence’, ‘Consequently’, ‘Alternatively’, ‘Nevertheless’ at the beginning of the sentence.

Rule 41: Do not use informal phrasal verbs

Rule 43: Employ tentative rather than assertive language.

- using ***possibly*** and ***probably*** in front of verbs and noun phrases; e.g. *'This is possibly caused by...'* or *'This is probably the most important factor.'*
- using the modal verbs ***may*** and ***might***; e.g. *'This may be the most important factor.'*
- using ***appears*** to + V and ***seems*** to + V; e.g. *'This appears to be the most important factor.'*
- avoiding ***always*** and ***every***, and replacing them with ***often*** and ***many/much***.
- avoiding ***certainly*** and ***obviously*** because this language can be condescending to your reader.

Academic writing argument is rarely expressed in strongly positive language. To express an idea or finding in such a way would leave the writer open to attack by critical readers. To avoid making strong claims and expressing subjective opinions, academic writers use tentative rather than assertive language. Compare the *tentative* and *assertive* language in the table below.

Rule 44: Use 'One' and 'There' as a subject

e.g. '*One may ask whether...*' ('One' is a formal version of 'You' [plural] in general) and Use '**There**' as a subject;
e.g. '**There is a serious risk of...**'

Some more phrases and their alternatives

- **One could say that ... / Perhaps, ...**
- **One could draw the conclusion that .../ In conclusion, ...**
- **As one might expect ... / Naturally ...**
- **There is not a shadow of doubt that ... / Certainly, ...**

There is the possibility that / Possibly, ...

There can be no doubt that .../ I am sure ...

There are those who maintain that ... / Some people say

There is a school of thoughts that ... / Some people say

There is a strong likelihood that ... / Probably. ...

