

Features of Academic Writing

Complexity

Formality

Precision

Accuracy

Structure

Objectivity

Hedging

Responsibility

- **Academic writing** is more complex, and has longer words. But do not try to sound ‘clever’. Your marker needs to understand what you are writing.
- Words and phrases are more **formal**. Think about the tone of your writing and make simple changes to phrases. E.g. instead of saying something like ‘This backs up ...’ say ‘This supports...’.
- Facts are **precise** – there is no room for inaccuracy. Check the quality of sources you are using and only use the most reliable (e.g. Wikipedia is **not** the most reliable source. Instead, look at the more reliable references or further reading lists that often feature at the foot of the page)

- Writing has to be **accurate**. You will use a lot of technical language in your discipline and you must make sure that you do not use the wrong terms.
- Most of you will already have had experience of writing a structured essay. Academic writing requires precise clear **structure** so the reader can follow the argument as clearly as possible. Remember to include an introduction, paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Depending on your subject, you have to be **objective** – very little in academic writing requires your personal opinion. Instead you are contributing to an academic debate about something. You have an opinion but this must be expressed objectively. Academic writing has far less emphasis on you and more emphasis on what it is you want to say.

- **Hedging** is quite a difficult feature to understand. In academic writing you have to make decisions about your stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims you are making. Be careful not to make strong claims such as ‘This proves..’ Instead, use phrases such as ‘It could be suggested that...’. Please refer to phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk for other useful phrases.
- You also have to take **responsibility** for what you say, and provide evidence for any claims you make. This means justifying why you do or do not agree with what an author has said as well as referencing correctly.