**HANDBOOK OF ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS**

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7. **Academic Language**
   1. Formality and Style

* Use formal and academic language
* Use academic grammar and expressions
* Use a standard vocabulary
* Generally uses the third person (he, she, it, they)
* Use authoritative and neutral tone
  1. Sentence Construction
* Use language that is accurate and concise. Avoid wordy sentences (for example, do not use double negatives or a string of adjectives or nouns).
* Check for consistency in tenses in sentences.
* Check for errors in sentence construction such as dangling modifiers; sentence fragments and misplaced modifiers.

**Editing Checklist**

1. **Basic Sentence Components:**
   * Missing subject
   * Missing object
   * Missing verb
   * Sentence fragment
   * Misplaced modifier
2. **Verbs**
   * Wrong verbs
   * Wrong verb tense
   * Wrong verb form
3. **Punctuation**
   * Long, run-on sentences
   * Failure to separate clauses with commas
4. **Nouns**
   * Pluralize nouns that don’t carry plurals
   * Use of informal nouns
   * Use of vague nouns
5. **Introduction to the Writing Paragraphs in Academic Style**

**2.1. The Process of Writing Paragraphs**

* The paragraph should contribute to the essay as a whole.
* It should not stand alone. Paragraphs are the key components of the essay.
* It is connected to the thesis statement of the essay.
* Overall, the paragraphs should flow from one to the other.
* Each paragraph should be unified. The main idea should be stated in the topic sentence of the paragraph.
* Each paragraph should be coherent. There should be a clear and logical coherence in the paragraph. The sentences should be linked through the use of appropriate transition words, for example, ‘consequently’, ‘therefore’, to show consequences or effects; ‘similarly’ to show similar ideas etc.
* Each paragraph should be developed. The general idea of the paragraph should be well-supported with evidence such as facts, examples, statistics and reasons.

**2.2. Structure of the paragraph and topic sentences**

* A paragraph focuses on the central idea. It focuses and develops on the topic sentence.
* The topic sentence can be placed at the beginning, middle or end of the paragraph. As a start, it is good to begin the paragraph with a topic sentence so that you’re reminded to focus on it for the rest of your paragraph.
* A paragraph should have coherence.

Ways to ensure paragraph coherence:

* Organize your paragraph. Ensure there is a logical consistency in your points.
* Repeat or restate key words and phrases in your paragraph.
* Use parallel structures.
* Be consistent in nouns, pronouns and verbs.
* Use transition words and phrases.
* Ways to organize a paragraph
* Organize by space or time
* Chronological organization
* Organizing for emphasis – moving from general-to-specific points; moving from specific-to-general points; climatic organization (building up to a climax)
* Be consistent in nouns, pronouns and verbs. Check for inconsistent shifts in your paragraph:
* Shifts in tense, e.g. moving inconsistently from present to past tense; from singular to plural tense when referring to the same subject
* Shifts in number, e.g. inconsistency between subject and verb tense
* Shifts in person, e.g. inconsistency of use of pronouns in the paragraph
* Transition Expressions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *To add or show sequence* | Again, also, and, besides, equally important, finally, first, second, third, furthermore, in addition, moreover, next, still, too. |
| *To compare* | Also, in the same way, likewise, similarly |
| *To contrast* | in contrast, alternatively, despite, even so, even though, however, in spite of, nevertheless, on the other hand, regardless, though, yet |
| *To give examples* | After all, an illustration of, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, to illustrate, specifically, truly |
| *To indicate place* | Above, further, here, near, on the other side, opposite to, to the right, to the left |
| *To indicate time* | Afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at that time, before, earlier, eventually, formerly, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, subsequently, then thereafter, until, when |
| *To repeat, summarize, or conclude* | All in all, altogether, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in summary, on the whole, therefore, to summarize |
| *To show cause and effect* | Accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thus, to this end, with the object |

* Develop the paragraph

Support your topic sentences by using

* Specific information, facts and statistics
* A pattern of development. Ask yourself:
* How did it happen? (Narration)
* What is it like (Description)
* What are the examples of it or reasons for it? (Illustration)
* What does it include or exclude? (Definition)
* What are the features or characteristics of it? (Analysis)
* What groups or categories can it be sorted into (Classification)
* How is it like, or different from, other things? (Comparison or contrast)
* Check for length of your paragraph

An average paragraph is about 100 to 150 words, or between 4-8 sentences. The length depends on the complexity of its topic, and its importance to the thesis statement. In general, avoid paragraphs that consist of only one statement, or fail to develop the topic sentence. Alternatively, avoid paragraphs that lump several main points together.

1. **Introduction to Writing the Essay** 
   1. Outline of an essay

* Understand your purpose for writing the essay. In academic writing, the general purposes are explanation and argumentation.
* Understand your audience. In academic writing, you assume an educated or academic audience. You assume an expert audience who will evaluate your arguments, evidence and conclusion.
* Understand the genre of the assignment. Generally, academic assignments fall into the following types of genres:
* Book reviews
* Term papers
* Argumentative papers
* Literature reviews
* Response papers
* Policy papers
* Research papers
* Develop a main point for your essay, then construct your thesis statement. Examine the scope of your thesis statement. The scope of your thesis statement should match the size of your assignment, for example, the scope for a 1,500 word assignment should be narrower than the scope for a 5,000 word assignment. If you’re unsure if your scope is appropriate, you should check with your professor.
* Support your main point with evidence. Your evidence may be drawn from information from your readings, personal experience, or in the case of research papers, primary data from research methods that you collect.
* Synthesize. Compare the viewpoints presented by different authors on the topic. Discuss these viewpoints. Consider your position in these viewpoints. Do you agree, disagree or do you have a different opinion on the issue?
* Acknowledge all your readings, including online sources. Check that you are using the required referencing style of your institution.
* Organize your content according to the type of writing you are doing, for example, a book review, literature review, etc. Use appropriate headings for these types of writing. Make sure your headings are parallel. For example, if you want to state your headings in the form of questions, you should use questions throughout. If you use titles, then ensure all your headings are in the form of titles.
  1. How to write a coherent essay

Check for unity and coherence

* Is each main section relevant to the thesis statement of the essay?
* In each main section, do the supporting statements and evidence support the thesis statement
* Do the ideas follow a logical sequence?
* Are the parts of the essay logically connected?
* Are the connections clear?
* Is there a logical development of the main argument?
* Do you use the necessary transition expressions?
  1. Writing of thesis statement and conclusion
* Narrow the topic and formulate your thesis statement.
* A thesis statement should contain the topic of the assignment question and your position or argument on the topic.
* You will have to draft and revise your thesis statement over the writing process.

**Checklist for revising the thesis statement:**

* How closely does your thesis statement relate to the topic of the assignment question?
* What claim does your thesis statement make about the subject?
* What is the significance of the claim? How does it answer the ‘so what?’ question and contribute to your purpose of writing.
* How can your claim be made more specific?
* How unified is the thesis statement?
* How well does the thesis statement express your position or opinion on the topic?
* The conclusion should summarize the main points and highlight the significance of your argument.

1. **The Argument Essay** 
   1. How to Develop Arguments

* Thesis Statement:
* In what ways is your thesis statement an arguable claim?
* Reasoning
* Are you using inductive or deductive reasoning?
* Have you checked for fallacies in your reasoning?
* Evidence
* What evidence have you provided to support your claim?
* Are your evidence accurate, relevant and representative of most cases?
* Appeals
* What are your readers’ beliefs and values?
* What appeals, rational, emotional and ethical, are you using?
* Opposite Views
* What are the opposite views on your topic?
* How do you counter these counter-arguments?
* Organization
* How clearly does your main argument develop?
* How appropriate is your method of organization?

1. **Critical Reading Skills and Citing Sources**

**Evaluating a Chapter of a Book or an Article**

* How clear is the author’s position?
* How strong is his evidence?
* Are his arguments consistent (logical and internal consistency)? Are the arguments balanced and unbiased?
* What do you think of his conclusions? Do you agree with them?

**Making Notes**

* Identify the thesis statement of the author
* Identify the topic sentences of the paragraphs
* Identify the connections among ideas
* Distinguish between facts and opinions
* Add your comments on the margin as you read the paper
* Develop a critical response to the reading. Answer the following questions:
* What is the purpose of your reading?
* What questions do you ask about the reading, given your purpose?
* How do you evaluate the author’s viewpoint and the significance of the reading?
* What assumptions does the author make? How far do you agree with these assumptions?
* What patterns can you see in main points of the author?
* What conclusions do you draw on these main points?
* Comparing one author with another.
* How does the viewpoint of one author compare with another?
* How does the work of one author fit into the context of other authors?
* What cultural, economic or political factors influence the work of the author?
* What historical factors influence the work of the author?
* Making a critique of what you read.
* What are your responses to the work?
* How sound is the author’s central idea?
* How well has the author achieved his/her purpose?
* How authoritative and trustworthy are the author’s sources?
* How unified and coherent is the work?
* How do the author’s examples, use of facts and statistics support the central argument?
* What is the overall quality and significance of the work?
* How far do you agree with the work?

6. **Dissertation**

**Checklist for Selecting Scholarly Papers**

1. **Suitability**
2. **Authority**
3. **Other Indicators**
4. **Reference Sources**
5. **Links**

In the research process you will encounter many types of resources including books, articles and websites. But not everything you find on your topic will be suitable. How do you make sense of what is out there and evaluate its authority and appropriateness for your research?

**Suitability**

Scope. What is the breadth of the article, book, website or other material? Is it a general work that provides an overview of the topic or is it specifically focused on only one aspect of your topic? Does the breadth of the work match your own expectations? Does the resource cover the right time period that you are interested in?

**Audience.** Who is the intended audience for this source? Is the material too technical or too clinical? Is it too elementary or basic? You are more likely to retrieve articles written for the appropriate audience if you start off in the right index. For instance, to find resources listing the latest statistics on heart disease you may want to avoid the Medline database which will bring up articles designed for practicing clinicians rather than social science researchers.

**Timeliness.** When was the source published? If it is a website, when was it last updated? Avoid using undated websites. Library catalogs and periodical indexes always indicate the publication date in the bibliograhic citation.

**Scholarly vs. Popular**

A scholarly journal is generally one that is published by and for experts. In order to be published in a scholarly journal, an article must first go through the peer review process in which a group of widely acknowledged experts in a field reviews it for content, scholarly soundness and academic value. In most cases, articles in scholarly journals present new, previously un-published research. Scholarly sources will almost always include:

**Bibliography and footnotes**

Author's name and academic credentials

As a general rule, scholarly journals are not printed on glossy paper, do not contain advertisements for popular consumer items and do not have colorful graphics and illustrations (there are, of course, exceptions).

Popular magazines range from highly respected publications such as *Scientific American* and *The Atlantic Monthly* to general interest newsmagazines like *Newsweek* and *US News & World Report*. Articles in these publications tend to be written by staff writers or freelance journalists and are geared towards a general audience. Articles in popular magazines are more likely to be shorter than those in academic journals. While most magazines adhere to editorial standards, articles do not go through a peer review process and rarely contain bibliographic citations.

A good resource that provides background information to help you evaluate periodicals is:

Magazines for Libraries (Doe Reference AP1.21.K3 Directories).

Tip: When searching a journal index such as Expanded Academic ASAP, try narrowing your search by limiting to refereed publications. This will retrieve only scholarly journals matching your search terms. Some other journal indexes offer this or a similar option.

If you do your searches in Web of Science, you will retrieve only scholarly articles since only academic journals are indexed in this database.

**Authority**

Who is the author? What are his or her academic credentials? What else has this author written? Sometimes information about the author is listed somewhere in the article. Other times, you may need to consult another resource to get background information on the author. Sometimes it helps to search the author's name in a general web search engine like Google. Among the reference sources available that list biographical information about authors and scholars are:

American Men & Women of Science (Doe/Biographies, Biosciences, and some other Reference sections at Q141.C312). Ask at reference desks about specialized versions for Economics, Medical, Social & Behavioral, and other disciplines.

Contemporary Authors (Doe Reference CT214.A12.C592 Biographies). Primarily literary and other writers. Partially online in Literature Resource Center UCB only

**Other Indicators**

Documentation. A bibliography, along with footnotes, indicates that the author has consulted other sources and serves to authenticate the information that he or she is presenting. In websites, expect links or footnotes documenting sources, and referring to additional resources and other viewpoints.

**Objectivity.**

What point of view does the author represent? Is the article an editorial that is trying to argue a position? Is the website sponsored by a company or organization that advocates a certain philosophy? Is the article published in a magazine that has a particular editorial position? Consult these resources which indicate whether a publication is known to be conservative or progressive, or is affiliated with a particular advocacy group:

Magazines for Libraries (Doe Reference AP1.21.K3 Directories)

Left Guide (Doe Reference HS2321.L44.R54 Directories)

Right Guide (Doe Reference HS2321.L44.R54 Directories)

In the appendices to these volumes, consult the lists of Periodicals; then look up the names of sponsoring organization.

***Primary vs. secondary research***. In determining the appropriateness of a resource, it may be helpful to determine whether it is primary research or secondary research.

***Primary research*** presents original research methods or findings for the first time. Examples include:

A journal article, book, or other publication that presents new findings and new theories, usually with the data

A newspaper account written by a journalist who was present at the event he or she is describing is a primary source (an eye-witness, first-hand account), and may also be primary "research"

A secondary research does not present new research but rather provides a compilation or evaluation of previously presented material. Examples include:

A scientific article summarizing research or data, such as in Scientific American, Discover, Annual Review of Genetics, or Bioglogical Reviews

An encyclopedia entry and entries in most other Reference books

***Article***

Take an article in a popular magazine such as Mother Jones about the public health aspects of handgun control -- if it relies on interviews with experts and does not present any new research in the area, this article would be considered secondary research. If one of the experts interviewed in the Mother Jones article published a study in JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association) documenting for the first time the effect that handguns have on youth mortality rates, only the JAMA article would be considered primary research.

***Websites.*** While most of the strategies listed above for evaluating information can be applied to any type of resource (books, articles or websites), the unfiltered, free-form nature of the Web provides unique challenges in determining a website's appropriateness as an information source. In evaluating a website, these are some questions that you can ask yourself:

Is there an author of the document? Can you determine the producer's credentials? If you cannot determine the author of the site, then think twice about using it as a resource.

Is the site sponsored by a group or organization? If it is sponsored by a group or company, does the group advocate a certain philosophy? Try to find and read "About Us" or similar information.

Is there any bias evident in the site? Is the site trying to sell you a product? Ask why the page was put on the web?

Is there a date on the website? Is it sufficiently up-to-date? If there is no date, again, think twice about using it. Undated factual or statistical information should never be used.

How credible and authentic are the links to other resources? Are the links evaluated or annotated in any way?

For a more detailed checklist of what to look for in a website and how to do it, see Evaluating Web

**Reference Sources**

***Book reviews***. A book review -- which can appear in a journal, magazine or newspaper -- provides a descriptive, evaluative discussion of a recently published book. Reading how others have evaluated a book may help you decide whether to use that book in your research. There are a number of indexes you can consult that provide references to book reviews:

Book Review Digest (1905-current ) (Doe Reference Z1219.B8 Indexes). Online: 1905-1982 and 1983-current. UCB only

Book Review Index (1965- ) (Doe Reference Z1035.A1.B6 Indexes)

New York Review of Books (1963-current).

***Journal Indexes***. You may also find reviews of books in many journal indexes by searching on the title and/or author of the book. Select a general journal index or an index for the subject area of the book.

***Citation indexes***. To see the impact a particular source has had on scholarship, you may want to consult a citation index. A citation index lists when and where a work has been cited. In other words, you could consult a Citation Index to see all the articles that have cited David Ho's research on HIV. The citation indexes are all available in the following database:

Web of Science: http://isiknowledge.com/wos

Science Citation Index (1945-present)

Social Sciences Citation Index (1970-present)

Arts & Humanities Citation Index (1975-present)

**How to Critically Analyze Information Sources. A quick guide to help you determine the relevance and authority of a resource.**

Evaluating Information Found on the Internet. A thoughtful guide to evaluating web and other Internet resources for scholarly purposes, from John Hopkins University Library.

Evaluation of Information Sources is an extensive list of links to the many other sites available on evaluating information.

*Source: The Regents of the University of California.*

**EVALUATING RESEARCH TOPIC**

**Evaluate your own group’s and other groups’ research topic based on the criteria below.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Topic**  (Write the topic in this column) | **Research Questions**  (Write the questions in this column) | **Criteria** | **Comments and Questions** |
|  |  | **Clear Focus** |  |
|  |  | **Research aim is stated clearly and concisely.** |  |
|  |  | **Significant – Does it matter if the research take place? In other words, will the findings help others to work towards solution of the problem; or help others understand more of themselves.** |  |
|  |  | **It is feasible. Able to obtain results from the research study. In other words, it is not a topic entirely dependent on opinions of people.** |  |
|  |  | **Able to draw conclusions on the topic.** |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Main Sections of Report** | **Sub-Sections** | **Content** | **Points to Note** | **Estimate Length of Writing** |
| I**ntroduction** | Background  Research Aim  Research Questions  Scope | 1. Definitions of topic and terms used in the research 2. Historical development of the research issues/situation 3. Present situation 4. The lead-up to the research question   State the aim as an open question and not as predetermined situation.  Explain how research aim leads to the research questions. List research questions using accurate and specific verbs and nouns.  State the focus of your study, e.g carried out on certain groups of people or places; sample size and duration of research (carried out in 2 weeks for example). | No need for subheadings in this part.  Write in complete sentence. Use words like ‘to find out’ and ‘investigate’ . | About ¾ of a page.  1 sentence. May or may not include one or two sentences of explanation.  1 paragraph. |
| **Literature Review** | Headings containing the areas covered in the research topic. | Paraphrase information from readings. Comment on the information (included in the same paragraph) | Headings must reflect the areas covered in the research topic. Paragraphs must be properly developed, ie you can’t write one or two-sentence paragraphs | About 3 to 4 pages. Not more than 4 pages. |
| **Methodology** |  | Research methods used, e.g surveys, interviews etc.  Rationale of choice of methods.  Types of sampling used.  Sample size.  Procedure of the conduct of the research methods, ie. Steps you took to conduct the research. | Explain research methods in complete sentences and properly developed paragraphs.  Leave out dates of conduct of research and specific names of people you interview. | One to one-and-a-half page |
| **Results** | Headings indicating parts of the results, e.g  ‘Advantages of Streaming’ etc. | Present your results:  Use tables, graphs and charts to present statistical results.  Quote and explain interview results. | Number and name your graphs, tables etc.  Refer to specific table number, title and specific statistics when explaining results in the graphics.  Comment on what the results show you, e.g state what the majority of people pick in your survey. | Three to four pages |
| **Analysis of Results and Conclusions** |  | Analyse your results.  Draw conclusions from your results.  Explain the implications of your results.  Explain the limitations of your study.  Recommend areas for further studies. | Write in full sentences and complete paragraphs.  Do not list your points. | Three pages |
| **References**  **Appendix** |  | List of your readings  A clean copy of your survey questionnaire.  Transcripts of your interviews.  Results that you did not include in your main ‘Results section. | Number your Appendix: Appendix I, Appendix II. |  |

**Language Features of a Research Paper**

1. **Research Aim/Objective**

This study aims to examine how ………….. factors affect ……………...

This research project investigates …………………………..

The objective of this study is to find out ………………………..

…………………………….. forms the objective of this study (Passive Voice)

1. **Research Questions**

The objective of this study addresses the following questions:

1. How do …………. factors influence …………………..?
2. How do ………………… respond to the …………………?
3. How do ……………. implement the …………………..?
4. What changes they make to …………… ?
5. **Research Problem**

**i. Describing a current problem**

In …………….., it is always a difficult task to …………..

In a situation where ……………….., it is easy to overlook ………..

……………… face a number of problems resulting from ………………..

Much pressure is placed on …………………..

Sometimes, when …………….. happen too fast, …………….. (people, institutions, organizations) may resort to ……………………...

**ii. Describing the importance of the study**

As such, it is important to find out how ……………………….

This makes …………… (your research topic) one of the most important considerations of ……………..

As a result, the government is concerned with ………….

With globalization, ………. (country) also faces …………….changes.

It is important to develop ………………………

It is now crucial to …………………………..

*Transitions for describing effects*

Consequently, constant………………….

In addition, …………………..

……………….. can also result when ……………………...

Thus, there is a need to study ……………………………..

**iii. Reporting on what authors have written on your research topic**

*A summary of what authors have written on your research topic*

The literature shows that …………….

…………paraphrase what authors have written (author’s surname, date of publication).

It is argued that …………. (author’s surname, date of publication).

(author’s surname, date of publication) wrote that ………..concerning ………..

(author’s surname, date of publication) described the characteristics of …….. as ….

*Comment on what the authors have written*

The question arising from this is how academics ……………...

The question, therefore, lies in how ……………

Such a view of change means that……………

More emphasis needs to be placed on ……………

However, the definitions of change given by (author’s surname, date of publication) identify the components of …………………… as …………………...

1. **Research Background or Literature Review**

This research then goes on to find out ……………….. (author’s surname, year of publication) claim that ……….factors affect …………...

This study seeks to examine the areas regarding ……………...

These areas are identified because ……………….

***-*** *Pointing to a gap in past research on your research topic*

Literature searches in ……………have failed to discover any research on ……..

……………… (the subject of your research) is therefore a crucial topic of research in ……...

Studies done in other countries are quantitative rather than qualitative in nature.

They also focus on ………….(particular research methods) ………… rather than ………………. (method you’ve chosen).

………. (method you’ve chosen) provides an opportunity for an in-depth study of ………….. (issues)

This study therefore aims to examine how ………………….

1. **Research Methodology**

**Qualitative/Quantitative Research**

**Primary Research   
Interviews/Focus Groups/Survey/Historical Research/Observation**

**Triangulation**

1. **Research Plan (containing deadlines)**

* **A Schedule for your research project**

Phase I Due Date

Phase II Due Date

Phase III Due Date

1. **Expected Findings**

**i. Reporting on the data**

It is expected that the persons to be interviewed will feel that …………..

Another problem is expected to be ……………………….

**ii. Explaining the causes behind the data**

It is predicted that ………….. will result in ………….

………………. is a key factor governing …………….as shown in the data collected after the conduct of the research methods.

1. **Bibliography**

Example of a reference:

*(author’s surname), (initials of first names) (date of publication), (title of book)*

Blenkin, G.M., Edwards, G. and Kelly, A.V. (1992), *Change and the Curriculum*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

*(place of publication: publisher’s name)*

**REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS FOR WRITING SKILLS**

\*Anson, C. M. and Schwegler, R. A. (2005). ***The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers*.** 5th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Bean, John C. (2011), ***Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom.*** CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cottrell, S. (2005), ***Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*,** Palgrave Study Guides, NY: Palgrave MacMillan

\*Fowler, H. Ramsey and Aaron, Jane E. (2007). ***The Little Brown Handbook.*** 10th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

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\*Goodson, Patricia (2013). ***Becoming an Academic Writer : 50 xercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful.*** CA: Sage Publications.

\* Hirsh, David (2010). ***Academic Vocabulary in Context*** . New York : Peter Lang.

\*Ridley, Diana (2012). ***The Literature Review : A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*,***2nd ed.* London : Sage Publications.

\*Rosenwasser, David and Stephen, Jill (2014), ***Writing Analytically,*** 7th Edition. Canada: Thomson Wadsworth.

\*Maimon, Peritz and Yancey, ***A Writer’s Resource – A Handbook for Writing and Research. 2nd edition***. Boston: McGraw-Hill

\*Swales, J. M. and Freak (2004), C.B, ***Academic Writing for Graduate Students – Essential Tasks and* Skills, 2.** Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.