

The LSS 'How to' Series



C1 Academic Style Guide

The Learning Support Service
learningsupport@iadt.ie

<http://www.iadt.ie/services/institute-student-services/learning-supports>

Academic writing style can seem very different from what you are used to, but it doesn't have to be terribly difficult. The most important thing to remember is that academic writing is **assertive**, **objective**, and **professional**.

This guide will give you some tips to ensure your writing makes the best possible impression.

Academic Style Guide

WRITING THAT IS **ASSERTIVE**:

- Avoids weak constructions such as 'I think,' 'I feel,' or 'I believe'
- Avoids self-referencing terms such as 'this essay' or 'this thesis'
- States claims confidently

WRITING THAT IS **OBJECTIVE**:

- Backs up claims with evidence
- Uses correctly formatted references
- Uses specific rather than general terms, such as '100 people' instead of 'some people'
- Uses descriptive adjectives rather than opinion adjectives, such as "useful" instead of "good"
- Uses the specialized vocabulary of the field

WRITING THAT IS **PROFESSIONAL**:

- Avoids slang and casual expressions
- Avoids contractions such as 'don't' and 'can't'
- Uses single words rather than phrasal verbs, such as 'participate' rather than 'take part in'
- Uses correct grammar, spelling, and formatting
- Is clear and easy to read and understand

Academic Style Guide

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Don't fall in the trap of thinking that academic writing has to be obscure. Your goal is to communicate clearly.
- Don't rely too much on a thesaurus. A small word that you understand completely and that is perfect for your meaning is better than a long word used incorrectly.
- Being concise will help you be clear. Don't use three words if one will do.
- When you are reading others' academic writing, pay attention to what makes their writing easy or difficult to understand.
- Try to notice the differences in different styles of writing. For example, how is the style of a newspaper different from that of a novel? How is academic writing different from both?
- The only reason to write in academic style is to get your ideas across clearly and convincingly. If your writing expresses what you have to say clearly, that's the most important thing.
- Remember that you may not master this skill immediately. As with anything else, the more you practice, the easier it will be.