

# A Beginner's Guide To Academic Writing

The ability to communicate effectively in writing is a transferable skill useful at all career levels. When it comes to academic writing, it is a skill which requires a fair amount of practise to develop competence. Once this is attained, many writers go on to develop their own unique styles. The guidelines below can serve as a good starting point to grow into your own identity.

**Plan out what you want to write**, this will reveal your knowledge gaps and guide your reading list. Your work should read as a story, with the first paragraph setting the scene. Work your way through from there, making sure to separate ideas using paragraphs. Having a structure is the key to being analytical and critical.



**Dedicate time to reading**, this will help you place your work in context and build on what is already known. It also allows you to express yourself authoritatively. Academic writing requires a lot of research even before the first word is written, so it's a good idea to set aside ample time if you want to beat deadlines

**Avoid literary clichés and flowery language.** Academic pieces of work inform and educate, mixing this up with excessive metaphors or analogies can be distracting. It is important to be precise. To do this, be formal without being fancy, use technical terms appropriately, surrounded by simple language so the meaning isn't lost.



**Communicate your ideas in a consistent manner.** An active voice rather than a passive tone tends to do this better as it is a natural way of expressing ideas. Avoid long sentences unless you can build these using short and clearly related units. This requires the [appropriate use of commas, semicolons and colons](#).

**Cite and reference your work.** Use a tool such as [Mendeley](#) to track your reading and generate your reference list at the end. Avoid referencing websites if you can find the primary source of information. Depending on the subject area, images and figures with a short descriptive text are always a great addition to your work



**Read, edit, reread and proofread.** The most experienced writers go through multiple drafts of their work before final submission and you should be no different. Spellcheckers and programs such as [Grammarly](#) can spot simple errors whereas a fresh pair of eyes can spot alternative ways to communicate your ideas.