



Using Academic Language

Academic language is the right kind of language to use in an essay. It is formal and professional and will make your essay sound impressive and polished – as though you know what you’re talking about!


NOTE: these rules are for certain situations only. You would not use this kind of language for a friendly email or a fictional story.


1. Use full words instead of contractions.

Contractions
(WRONG)  “It’s obvious culture **can’t** be...”
“That’s why loyalty & duty **don’t**...”
“E.g. Chi is seen as powerful, mysterious, **etc.**”


Full Words
(RIGHT)  “It is obvious that culture **cannot** be...”,
“That is why loyalty **and** duty **do not**...”
“For example, Chi is seen as powerful, mysterious, **and so on.**”


2. Use words (not numerals) for numbers below 100.

Numerals
(WRONG)  “This is the **1st** example...”
“When she is about **8** years old...”

Words
(RIGHT)  “This is the **first** example...”
“When she is about **eight** years old...”


3. Don’t use slang or casual language. Choose bigger and more formal words than you’d normally use (AS LONG AS you still know what they mean). Never use multiple exclamation points.

Slang
(WRONG)  “Mulan’s **dad** then **rushed** in and **grabbed** his **knife!!!!!!**”
“There are **lots of** reasons why **things changed**...”

Formal
(RIGHT)  “Mulan’s **father** then **hastened** in and **seized** his **sword.**”
“There are **many** reasons why **conditions varied**...”

4. Use sophisticated transition words. Where possible, avoid the simple FANBOYS versions.

Simple
(WRONG)  and, but, so, or

Sophisticated
(RIGHT)  in addition, however, consequently

5. Nominalise (turn verbs into nouns).

Verb form
(WRONG) ❌ Mulan **was brave** and she **protected** her family...
Mushu **failed** to sense danger which **caused**...

Nominalised
(RIGHT) ✅ Mulan's **bravery** ensured the **protection** of her family...
Mushu's **failure** to sense danger was the **cause** of...

6. Use the 3rd person point of view ('he, she, they'). Avoid 1st or 2nd person ('I, me, you, we, us').

First Person
(WRONG) ❌ "I think **you** can see from this..."
"This makes **us** think..."

Third Person
(RIGHT) ✅ "From this it **can be seen**..."
"This makes **the viewer** think..."

7. Be objective (unbiased) and impersonal. State facts, not opinions.

Subjective
(WRONG) ❌ **I believe** that this is **nonsense**, because...
In my opinion this is a wonderful example...

Objective
(RIGHT) ✅ This point **may not be accurate**, because...
This example is **worth considering**...

8. Be specific. Avoid vague generalisations.

Vague
(WRONG) ❌ We can learn **something** from this....
There are **many** other examples...
Several **things** can be seen...

Specific
(RIGHT) ✅ **What** can be learned from this is **(x, y)**...
Another example is when Mulan says **(x, y)**....
One reason is that **(x, y)**...

9. Use the correct terminology to refer to different film versions. Put the title of the film in italics and the date it was released in brackets.

Slang
(WRONG) ❌ In **the old one**, the father...
In the **new movie**, she is...

Version, Title, Year
(RIGHT) ✅ In ***Mulan* (1998)**, the father...
In the **2020 adaption** of the legend of Mulan...
In the cartoon **version** of the **film**, the characters...