

Being clear and correct - transcript

Slide 1: Welcome to this presentation on academic style and proof reading. You can pause, rewind, fast forward or stop this presentation at any point. It is recommended that you take notes during this presentation as this will promote active learning and it is therefore more likely to stick.

Slide 2: It is often tempting to try to make things sound 'clever' by using fancy words. This can ultimately make it more difficult for the reader to follow and as a result they can become disengaged with your work. It is important that your academic writing is clear and concise, without losing its meaning or any key information. Take a look at these sentences before and afterwards. You can see that the second one retains the important message and scientific content, but is much easier to follow.

Slide 3: There are several characteristics to academic writing, the first being that it is always planned and focused. If you haven't already, head over to the presentation on planning for more advice on this. Secondly it is always well structured and evidenced, this can be supported by effective planning. For more support on structure or gathering evidence from research, check out the presentations on lab report or essay structure and how to research. Lastly there is always a formal tone and style, let's talk more about this.

Slide 4: There are several academic conventions, or rules that you must follow. Avoiding contractions, this is where you shorten words, usually two, into one word, this should be avoided as it can sound and read like speech rather than writing. Avoid being personal and using words such as I, we, me, us, you, if this is something you require further support with, head over to the presentation 'First, Second and Third Person'. Any number below 100 should be written in letters rather than numbers, with the exception of any data. Avoid abbreviations as it can appear lazy, so instead of writing e.g., write 'for example'. DO not use clichés or jargon in your writing as not every reader will understand them. Lastly do not sensationalise and overstate, make sure every point you make is supported with evidence.

Slide 5: Just a brief mention on paragraph structure, if you need more information about this you can watch the presentation 'how to structure an essay' for more guidance. Here is a brief outline of how your paragraphs should be structured. Feel free to pause and make a note of this for future reference.

Slide 6: So here is a good example of how your paragraph might look. The main point is in blue, followed by your supporting evidence in red and your comment which is linked back to the topic in green. Again, feel free to pause at this point to have a closer look.

Slide 7: So you have written your assignment and now you are on to the editing process, yes you should always edit your assignment, you wouldn't post that status update without re-reading it first. Start by looking at the main point in your paragraph and ask yourself these questions. Doing this with each paragraph will make sure that your content is relevant, supported with evidence and logical.

You can then look at the introduction and conclusion to decide whether they are appropriate by asking yourself these last two questions. Pause here if necessary and take notes.

Slide 8: Top tips for proof reading. Firstly and probably most importantly, make sure you leave enough time to do this, it is your responsibility. Often we can read things differently from how they actually appear so a good way around this is to print your work out and read it out aloud, as you do you need to consider whether your word order makes sense and where punctuation is needed. Remember, if you can complete a sentence without taking a breath, it needs punctuation. Look at any previous feedback you may have and make sure that you have aimed to act upon it in this particular assignment. Also, have a go at reading it backwards, it won't make sense but it can help to highlight any spelling mistakes that you had missed first time round.

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Slide 9: Whilst proofreading, check your language use. Firstly, check for spelling, punctuation and grammar, then check that you haven't used any contractions or abbreviations and lastly check for discriminatory language. For example it is tempting to refer to an author as 'he' when you are unsure of gender, to avoid this use 'they' where gender is unclear.

Slide 10: Another proofreading tip is to check for formatting, this is how your assignment is presented. You want to consider numbering, for example are the SI units correct? Labelling, do all your graphs and tables have the correct headings? Font size, this is usually dictated in your assignment brief but if it isn't, the standard is usually no bigger than 12 and no smaller than 9. Page numbering and line spacing, again these are usually indicated in your assignment brief.

Slide 11: Last thing to mention is to check your referencing, have you used the correct style? Do all your citations have references and do all your references have citations? And is it in alphabetical order?

Slide 12: So in summary, you are not writing to impress, you need to be clear and concise, keeping all the key information, leave enough time for editing and proof read all of your work. If you require further support with anything mentioned in this presentation you can contact your Academic Skills Tutors but remember, you will be asked what you have tried so have a go first, you may surprise yourself.