“Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task.” - L. Lennie Irvin

The main task of academic writing is to refine and focus an idea through research and interrogation, then to clearly state and properly support that idea with effective argumentation and adequate evidence. Any style of writing that stands in the way of your ideas is not serving your task: to communicate. Be sure to ask for specific requirements within your discipline.

Many students think that the word academic describes writing that is difficult to read, full of complicated ideas articulated in long sentences, with gargantuan, obfuscatory language only an anointed academic can understand. Sometimes academic writing is like that, but that doesn’t mean it always should be. It is important to strike a balance between clearly articulating arguments without diminishing the depth of content. Academic Writing should be:

- **Considerate**: understand your reader’s expectations well enough to meet them.  
  Tip: Have a clear picture of your intended reader’s knowledge and biases.
- **Critical**: build the trust of your reader by investigating ideas thoroughly.  
  Tip: Determine how much evidence is necessary to support your claims.
- **Clear**: choose language and punctuation that don’t confuse your intended reader.  
  Tip: Strive to begin sentences and paragraphs by stating the main point.
- **Concise**: remove extra information that would distract from the purpose of the text.  
  Tip: Look for unnecessary words or repetitive phrases to cut.
- **Coherent**: be sure all ideas and evidence connect to your main point.  
  Tip: Constantly ask whether each piece of evidence is supporting your point.
- **Correct**: be sure that formatting, referencing, and all data are accurate.  
  Tip: Give yourself a day or two before the deadline to proofread.

We have many materials on this site designed to support different areas of academic writing. Some guides are specific to different disciplines. Other guides help with the complex processes involved in composing a successful academic text - i.e. how best to actually do the work. For one-to-one help, come to the Academic Skills Hub or schedule a session with the Writing Centre.