

English Skills for Academic Staff in  
Higher Education Summer School

Masaryk University Language Centre

22.07.24 – 26.07.24

Writing  
Techniques for  
Effective  
Communication in Higher  
Education

**M U N I** **Language**  
**C J V** **Centre**

# Writing Time! First Draft

- **Topic:** The impact of technology on traditional education
- **Prompt:** Some people believe that the rapid advancement of technology is having a detrimental effect on traditional forms of education, such as face-to-face teaching and printed books. Others argue that technology has greatly enhanced the learning experience by providing greater access to information and enabling new teaching methods.
- **Task:** Discuss both views and give your own opinion. Support your argument with examples and relevant evidence. (200+/- words)

# Simple Steps: Paragraph Writing

- A basic paragraph should consist of four key parts.
  - 1) **Topic Sentence** (sometimes called a paragraph leader).
  - 2) **Development** (a detailed explanation of the topic).
  - 3) **Example** (this can be data, stats, evidence, etc..).
  - 4) **Summary** (summarise the ideas &/or evaluate how effective these are).

# A Basic Sample Paragraph

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can generate a positive reputation for a company leading to possibly more sales and growth. According to Jones et al (2019), a corporation that invests in the environmental and ethical approaches of CSR will demonstrate to the public and the media that they are a responsible company. Watson (2018) provides evidence that this improves consumer sales as customers tend to support ethical green business practices thus improving profitability and encouraging growth. For example, a yoghurt company called Yeo Valley has been investing in making its products organic, creating fully recyclable packaging and reducing its CO2 output. As a result, profits have doubled in the last two years providing the company with a range of opportunities to expand (Peterson, 2019). Overall, the evidence seems to suggest that investing in CSR can improve brand image and productivity.

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# The importance of the topic sentence

- A Topic Sentence should connect clearly to the content of the paragraph. This image highlights how the key terms in the body of the paragraph connect to the topic and controlling idea of the topic sentence.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can generate a positive reputation for a company leading to possibly more sales and growth.

# Basic cohesion in a paragraph

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can generate a positive reputation for a company **leading to** possibly more sales and growth. According to Jones et al (2019), a corporation **that** invests in the environmental and ethical approaches of CSR will demonstrate to the public and the media that **they** are responsible company. Watson (2018) provides evidence that this improves consumer sales as customers tend to support ethical green business practice **thus** improving profitability and encouraging growth. **For example**, a yoghurt company called Yeo Valley has been investing making its products organic, creating fully recyclable packaging and reducing its CO2 output. **As a result**, profits have doubled with the last two years **providing** the company with a range of opportunities to expand (Peterson, 2019). **Overall**, the evidence seems to suggest that investing in CSR can improve brand image and productivity.

# Writing Time! Second Draft!

- **Topic:** The impact of technology on traditional education
- **Prompt:** Some people believe that the rapid advancement of technology is having a detrimental effect on traditional forms of education, such as face-to-face teaching and printed books. Others argue that technology has greatly enhanced the learning experience by providing greater access to information and enabling new teaching methods.
- **Task:** Review your first paragraph by clarifying the topic sentence, development, examples, and summary. Make sure the paragraph has cohesion. (200+/- words)



# Academic Writing & Language

- Academic writing is a formal approach to assignments:
  - Formal structure following academic conventions
  - Formal tone and use of language
- Writing in an academic style is something that can be learnt through guidance and conscientious practice

# The Importance of Academic Style

Success on your writing is determined by your understanding of the content and your discipline

Your understanding is shaped by how you engage with content

Your engagement with research content is assessed by **what and how you communicate in your writing**

# Characteristics of Academic Style

- 'Think about it– Talk about it – Write about it'
- ACCURACY → All the information you provide must accurately reflect the content of your source materials
- Brevity → Keep it brief. Including a wide range of material, within your word count, means there's no room to go off-topic
- Clarity → Make sure the content of your essay is easy for your reader to follow and understand.

# Successful Academic Writers

- READ → Take notice of writing styles and conventions. Be influenced by the writers you enjoy reading.
- WRITE → Read your work critically. Identify what you need to change to improve fluency edit and re-write it.
- LEARN → New vocabulary. Have a systematic approach to help you memorise unfamiliar terms.

# Strategies for Academic Writing

- RELEVANT → Your writing should be clearly related to your essay question; make frequent references to the question.
- ORGANISED → Develop a fluent narrative by linking the points you raise in a logically consistent way.
- Follows Academic Conventions → For essays: Introduction, middle section, conclusion. Include a range of perspectives. Fully referenced.

# Formality

- Adopt a formal voice
- Avoid trying to sound too clever or pompous
- Try to sound natural

## Formality

***Too informal***

It's clear that the CEO of RBS's rushed decision to buy ABN Amro wasn't the smartest move.

or...

The combination of a domineering chief executive, an overly compliant management team and a false sense of urgency were crucial in RBS's disastrous decision to acquire ABN Amro.

or...

***Too clever***

The synthesis of solipsism with sycophancy within RBS's climate of elusory exigency evinced an impolitic acquisition of ABN Amro.

# Precision

Be specific – how many? When? Avoid vague generalities

Do not make things unnecessarily complex – try to express ideas clearly. Don't use excessively long sentences or abstruse language!

Provide specific details, aim for fluent, clear descriptions



# Precision

Many young people drink too much.

**Imprecise**

or...

**Precise enough?**

One in four 16-25 year-olds consume more alcohol than the Government's recommended weekly maximum.

(expand/explain/reference)

or...

**Too detailed?**

Twenty three percent of people aged 16-25, consume >140ml of ethanol alcohol ( $C_2H_6O$ ) per week. (reference)

# Objectivity

Avoid narrow subjectivity – not everyone will agree with your argument

Structure your writing to show that you are questioning and analysing your sources

Try to adopt a neutral voice, unless you are aiming for a clear and convincing conclusion

# Objectivity

It is totally obvious that wealth needs to be distributed more fairly.

**Too emotive**

or...



It is clear from the above discussion that without greater redistribution of wealth, world economic growth will slow.

or... **Objective, but clear?**

The accumulation of capital by a small segment of the population correlates negatively with GDP growth.

# Clarity

Write to inform, not to impress

You may know what you mean, but will your reader?

Avoid making value judgments – let your reader decide, after considering the evidence you present

## Clarity

# Equivocal

There are quite a few reasons why micro-SMEs often fail during their first year of operating.

or...

# Clear

There are **three** main reasons why micro-SMEs can fail during their first year of operating: lack of capital; external market factors; and poor business planning.

or...

# Clear & argumentative

Whilst micro-SMEs can fail for a number of reasons during their first year of operation – lack of capital, external market factors, etc. – the **most significant** factor is inadequate and inaccurate business planning.

# Signposting

Helps your reader to follow your argument

Clarifies and confirms your sources

Consolidates the points you are making

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

## Signposting

# Highlight transitions

Having discussed the scale of the problem, a possible solution can now be presented.

# Highlight your sources

Viewing this from the perspective of Smith's (2012) model, what becomes clear is that...

# Highlight your approach

Whilst many studies have considered the relationship between profitability and environmental responsibility, few have done so from an ethnological perspective.

# Hedging

Avoid over-confident, simplistic claims. There are (at least) two sides to every story

Avoid being over-cautious. Say it how it is.

If the evidence is inconclusive, you can state that further research is needed in the field



# Hedging

This proves that the banking crisis of 2007 was caused by subprime mortgages.

**Over-certain**

or...

This suggests that subprime mortgages were a key factor in precipitating the banking crisis of 2007.



or...

**Over-cautious**

This seems to suggest that subprime mortgages might possibly be partly responsible for some aspects of the banking crisis of 2007.

# Explaining Yourself Fully

Helps your reader to understand

Shows your reader that *you* understand

Nurtures debate and reflection and avoids a  
soundbite style

Explaining  
Yourself  
Fully

Based on the above discussion, it seems reasonable to claim that...

**Justification**

As Marx explained: 'the bureaucrat has the world as a mere object of his action' (Marx 1843).

**What does this mean?**

As Marx explained: 'the bureaucrat has the world as a mere object of his action' (Marx 1843). **In other words, bureaucracy creates alienation and indifference to others...**

**Shows understanding**

# Writing is a Process

Improvement takes time and effort – don't be hard on yourself, stay focused and keep practising!

Make use of your feedback – implement the necessary changes next time

Re-read the essays you wrote last year. This will give you a clear sense of how your writing has improved.

# Writing Time! Revision

- Revise your paragraph according to the topics listed below;
  - Formality
  - Precision
  - Objectivity
  - Clarity
  - Signposting
  - Hedging
  - Explaining yourself fully