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Academic writing and style

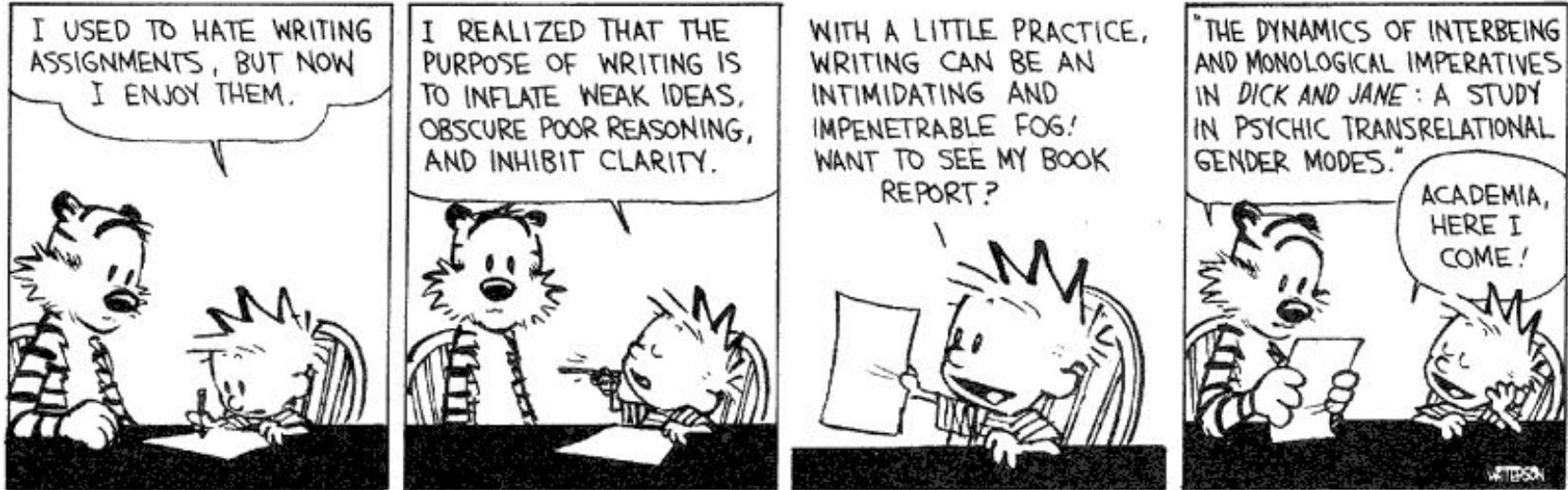
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What is academic writing?

Do you agree?

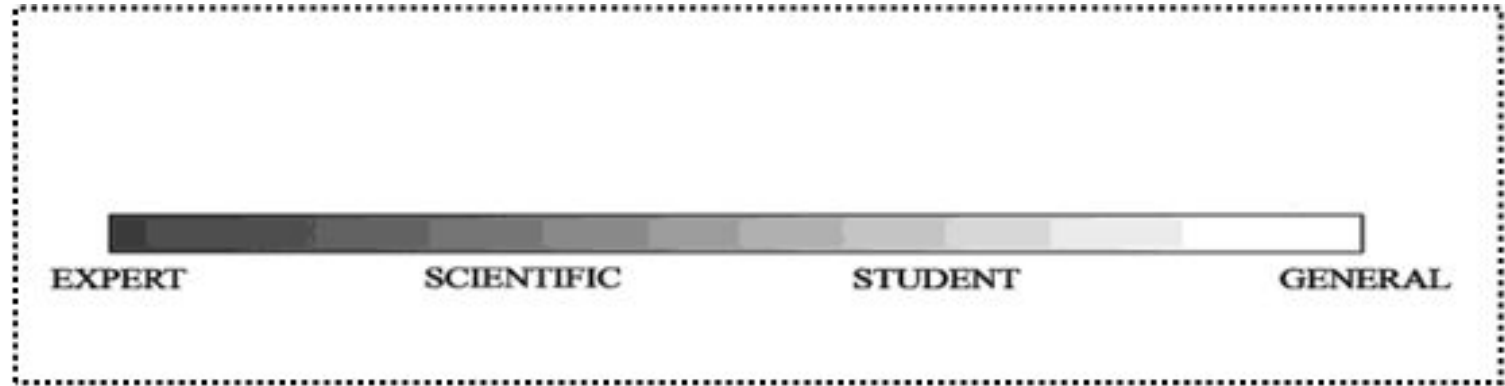


What is academic writing?

- **Who** is writing? **Who** is the audience?
- **What** is the writing about?
- **Why** is the writing done?

Academic audience

What kinds of academic texts do we write? Who are they for?



Academic texts

What kinds of texts are these? How are they different in terms of organisation, language and style?

- A. student essay
- B. academic book
- C. project proposal
- D. peer review

What are the most important characteristics?



neatly presented	cohesive	with full forms of words
objective	correct	without redundancies
explicit	factual	with flowing structure
hedged	unambiguous	without clichés
frequent 3rd person pronouns	accurate	responsible
well structured	neutral	backed up by evidence
professionally acceptable	revised	understandable
linear structure	timeless	specific
without colloquialisms	re-drafted	referenced
precise	clear	nominalized
claiming authority	formal	tentative
more frequent passive voice	impersonal	no negative forms
with explicit links between ideas		coherent
with clear understanding of the subject		concise
relevant within the discourse of your discipline		

Academic writing vs. speech

Nowadays companies are finding that they have to change the way they do things and they're finding that human resources planning is really helpful when they have to do this. One reason why it's helpful is because it can help the companies work out what the issues are and then, when you've done that, it can help you make up your mind what you're going to do about it. Basically, human resource planning is what you do when you're going through

As companies experience the need for change, they often apply human resource planning to define the relevant issues and develop responses to them. Broadly defined, human resource planning is the process of analysing an organisation's human resources needs under changing conditions and developing the activities necessary to satisfy those needs.

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Cultural differences in academic writing

Academic writing: English vs. Czech

What differences are there between academic texts written in Czech and English?

- Structure
- Organisation of ideas
- Language
- Style
- Author's aims

‘[Czech academic writing] is more **intellectual** and **less reader-friendly** than the Anglo-American academic style. Anglophone authors tend to present their ideas in a clear and easily comprehensible way: they organize their texts carefully, indicating text-organization by transparent graphical signals, and apply simpler lexical and grammatical patterns, including repetition. Many **Czech authors**, by contrast, prefer more **complex grammatical structures**, and – in agreement with the Czech stylistic norm – avoid the repetition of words by an **extensive use of synonyms**. Czech texts are often **less logically and less transparently organized** than texts written in English. English academic texts are primarily oriented towards the reader, while **Czech texts focus on the topic** and the presentation of all its **complexity**.’

(Chamonikolasová 2005: 77)

Academic writing: your language/culture

Is academic writing in your language/culture more similar to English or Czech? Consider:

- Structure
- Organisation of ideas
- Language
- Style
- Author's aims

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What is academic style?

First draft: what's wrong here?

1.1

How to make people work harder is a topic that lots of people have written about in the last few years. There are lots of different theories etc and I think some of them are ok. When we think about this we should remember the old Chinese proverb, that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. So how do we increase production? It's quite a complex subject but I'll just talk about a couple of ideas.

(Bailey 2011: 151)

How to make people work harder . . .	Imprecise vocabulary – use ‘motivation’
. . . lots of people . . .	Vague – give names
. . . the last few years.	Vague – give dates
lots of different . . .	Avoid ‘lots of’
. . . etc . . .	Avoid using ‘etc’ and ‘and so on’
. . . I think . . .	Too personal
. . . are ok.	Too informal
When we think about this . . .	Too personal
. . . the old Chinese proverb . . .	Do not quote proverbs or similar expressions
So how do we increase production?	Avoid rhetorical questions
It’s quite a . . .	Avoid contractions
. . . I’ll just talk about a couple . . .	Too personal and informal

(Bailey 2011: 151)

Second draft: what's changed?

1.2

Motivation has been the subject of numerous studies during recent decades, but this essay will focus on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) and Herzberg's two-factor theory (1966). Their contemporary relevance to the need to motivate employees effectively will be examined critically, given that this can be considered crucial to a firm's survival in the current economic climate.

(Bailey 2011: 151)

Academic style guidelines (Bailey 2011)

Read Bailey's guidelines for academic style.

- Are there any points you disagree with? Why?
- Are there any points which Bailey has missed?
- What do you think are the most common style errors in your academic writing?