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Grammar in academic texts

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Which text seems more academic?



Text 1 = academic text

- Mostly consists of long (sometimes complex) noun phrases, e.g. *one source of business ideas; the degree to which one is already motivated and knowledgeable about the area*
- Verbs are ‘lexically empty’ and mainly used to link ideas within the noun phrases, e.g. *are; have*
- Simple sentence structures, e.g. *The advantages are X and Y; The disadvantages include W and Z.*
- Main function of the text is to describe

Text 2 = magazine article?

- Addresses the reader directly, e.g. *think about your hobbies;*
You might be able to
- Makes assumptions about the reader, e.g. *You probably already know about the area and find it motivating*
- Empty/‘dummy’ subjects, e.g. *There are*
- Verbs carry some of the information, e.g. *enjoy*
- Contractions, e.g. *didn’t*
- Complex sentences with dependent/subordinate clauses, e.g. *If it becomes your work, you might no longer enjoy the activity and find it relaxing.*

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Verb	Noun phrase	Controlling noun
are	one source of business ideas	source
may ... have	commercial potential	potential
are	the degree to which one is already motivated and knowledgeable about the area	degree
(and)	the possibility that it might make a very agreeable occupation	possibility
include	ignorance about the market for the product or service	ignorance
(and)	the loss of the relaxation enjoyed when the interest was only a hobby	loss

Determiner	Premodifier	Head noun	Postmodifier
<i>one</i> (numeral)		<i>source</i>	<i>of business ideas</i> (prepositional phrase)
	<i>commercial</i> (adjective)	<i>potential</i>	
<i>the</i> (article)		<i>degree</i>	<i>to which one is already motivated</i> (relative clause)

No modifier: 42% (of academic texts)

Premodifier: 26%

Postmodifier: 21%

Pre- and postmodifier: 11%

Premodifier + noun

adjective - the *constitutional* aspects

ed-participle - a *balanced* budget, from the *confused* events of 19-24 August, the *emitted* light

ing-participle - *growing* problem, one *striking* feature of the years 1929-31, *existing* structures

noun - *market* forces, *cabinet* appointments

Noun + postmodifier

relative clause - students *who have no previous experience*

to-clauses - the ability *to succeed*, the question *to be debated*

ing-clauses - a brake *consisting of a drum divided into twelve compartments*

ed-clauses - canoes *preserved by a hard plaster*, a brake *consisting of a drum divided into twelve compartments*, the curve *shown*

prepositional phrase (preposition + nominal group)- we need to bring to the box a special tool *with a ready-compressed spring*

adverb (or adverbial group) - the road *back*, the people *outside*

adjective (or adjectival group) - varieties *common in India*, the festival *proper*, something *different*

that complement clause - the news *that the research had succeeded was unexpected*

to-infinitive complement clause - the failure *to provide him with adequate research facilities*

of + ing complement clause - the possibility *of increasing dollar receipts*

wh- complement clauses - the question *(of) whether there remained a distinctive philosophy of liberalism*