

Lecture 1. An Introduction to Academic Writing

Hello, my name is Svetlana Danilovna, I'm a lecturer in this course that is called Basics of Academic Writing. Today I'm going to introduce you to this course.

In Academic Writing we are going to use Academic English; so, Let's answer the following questions:

- 1 What is academic English?
- 2 What is academic writing?
- 3 What are the general characteristics of academic writing?
- 4 Why is academic writing important?

Let's begin with the first question what is academic English?

At its most basic, academic English is the variety of the English language that we use to share research.

There are two varieties of academic English: **spoken academic English** and **written academic English**.

Let's take a closer look at this second variety - written academic English that we use for Academic Writing.

When most people think of academic writing they think of thesis papers composed by graduate students and research articles written by professional scholars.

Right, these are two great examples of academic writing, but there are also many different kinds of academic writing from literature reviews to research papers, abstracts, and lab reports. The kind of writing you will do in this class is called **academic writing** because it is the kind of **writing you do in college classes**. Every kind of writing has a particular purpose and a particular audience. The purpose of academic writing is to explain something or to give information about something. Its audience is your teacher and your classmates.

Each kind of academic writing has its own rules, but there are few traits that are common to most academic writing:

First, good academic writing starts with focused and specific questions to be answered

Second, academic writing emphasizes logical reasoning over emotional or sensory perceptions. Facts are more important than feelings. Effective

academic writing demonstrates clear critical thinking and the ability to make arguments stronger by supporting them with evidence.

Third, academic writing must be clear English in both context and language.

Fourth, academic writing must be coherent. This means that there are logical connections between sentences. It also means that paragraphs are unified around the single idea, and all the information helps to create an effective argument.

Finally, effective academic writing follows a process consisting of certain steps.

These steps are:

- 1 Analyze the task and identify your target audience.
- 2 Plan your argument.
- 3 Develop a main claim and decide how you will support this claim with evidence.
- 4 Research to gather fact-based evidence for the argument.
- 5 Write multiple drafts (no good writing is done overnight).
- 6 Edit and proofread your writing to see how well you've structured your argument.
It is also important to consider things like punctuation and proper spelling.
- 7 Ask peers and colleagues for comments.

Academic writing is an important skill to master for a wide variety of professional and personal reasons. It improves one's verbal and critical thinking skills, and professional qualifications. It also makes you a more attractive candidate for potential employers.

So, in the end we see that academic writing is about much more than just the act of writing. It isn't simply one skill but a collection of important, useful, and effective skills.

Part 2

In part 2 of this lecture let's get to writing and learn some important rules. It is clear that every piece of writing consists of sentences. Different types of sentences. But the basis for all different types of sentences is a **simple sentence**.

A **sentence** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. A sentence begins with a capital letter

and ends with a period.

These are sentences:

He is a student.

It is hot today.

He looks tired.

These are **not** sentences:

Is very athletic. (*There is no subject.*)

The man bought. (*This is not a complete thought. What did the man buy?*)

Command Sentences

If a sentence gives a command or instruction, we understand that the subject is *you*, but we don't say or write *you*. The verb in a command sentence is always in the simple (dictionary) form—*stop, go, wait, be, eat*. To make a command negative, put *don't* in front of the verb.

Commands

Negative Commands

Be quiet.

Wait for me!

Speak slowly.

Don't eat so much!

Don't forget to call home.

Don't worry.

In English, the subject of a sentence is *always* expressed (except in commands). The **subject** tells who or what did something. It is a noun or pronoun.

e.g. We came at 6 pm.

The **verb** usually tells an action. Sometimes a verb doesn't tell an action. Sometimes it just links the subject with the rest of the sentence.

e.g. We came at 6 pm.

Action verbs name an action, such as *hit, live, lose, speak, go, and come*.

Linking verbs link the subject with the rest of the sentence. Linking verbs do not have objects. The most common linking verbs are *be, become, look, feel, seem, smell, sound, and taste*.

e.g. *It is late.*

The **object** receives the action of an action verb. It is a noun or pronoun.

e.g. He bought a printer.

To find an object, make a question by putting *what* after an action verb. (*Note: This method for finding objects doesn't work with linking verbs because linking verbs do not have objects.*)

My roommate lost **his keys**.

(Lost what?—his keys. His keys is an object.)

Not all sentences have objects.

The sun is shining today.

(Is shining what?—not possible. This sentence has no object.)

Certain verbs **MUST** have objects. Some of these verbs are *buy, give, have, like, love, need, own, place, put, spend, and want*.

They need **some money**.

CAPITALIZATION

In English, there are many rules for using capital letters. Here are six important ones.

Rules	Examples
Capitalize:	
1. The first word in a sentence.	My neighbor is a mechanic.
2. The pronoun I.	My friends and I often study together.

<p>3. Names of people and their titles.</p> <p>BUT NOT a title without a name.</p> <p><i>Exception:</i> A title without a name is sometimes capitalized if it refers to a specific person.</p>	<p>King Charles, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Simpson</p> <p>He's a king. Have you met your math professor?</p> <p>The President of the United States had dinner with the Emperor of Japan.</p>
<p>4. Nationalities, languages, religions, and ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Swedish English Asian Muslim Native American</p>
<p>5. Names of school courses with numbers.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Don't capitalize school subjects except names of nationalities, languages, religions, and college classes with numbers.</p>	<p>Psychology 101</p> <p>history</p> <p>Russian history</p>
<p>6. Specific places you could find on a map.</p>	<p>England the North Pole Lake Superior First Street New York City</p>

We will continue in Lecture 2.