

(Week 1)

## What is Academic Writing?

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.

Academic writing requires certain skills. These skills include **sentence structure** (how to arrange words in a sentence), **organization** (how to arrange ideas in a paragraph), and, of course, **grammar** and **punctuation**.

## SENTENCE

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

### **S+V (+O...)**

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 (Imperative)**

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

Be quiet.  
Wait for me!  
Speak slowly.

## Negative Commands

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*.



called **conjunctions**. There are many conjunctions in English. Two of the most common ones are *and* and *or*. They have different meanings.

*And* joins two or more similar things in positive sentences.

e.g.

I like Chinese **and** Italian food.

We have class on Mondays, Wednesdays, **and** Fridays.

*Or* connects two or more similar things in negative sentences.

e.g.

I don't like warm milk **or** cold coffee.

We don't have class on Tuesdays **or** Thursdays.

*Or* also connects two or more choices or alternatives.

e.g.

I would like to go to London, Rome, **or** Paris on my next vacation.  
(*I cannot go to all three places. I will choose one.*)

My father **or** my mother will meet me at the airport.

(This sentence means that only one person will come to the airport.)

Compare:

My father and my mother will meet me at the airport.

(This sentence means that two people will come to the airport.)

## COMBINING SENTENCES

Sentence combining is a way to improve your sentence-writing skills. When you do a sentence-combining exercise, you combine two (or more) short sentences into one longer sentence. All the long sentences together make a paragraph.

There may be several correct ways to combine the sentences. However, there are a few rules to follow.

- 1) Don't repeat words if possible. For example, in the example below, don't repeat *I am*.
- 2) You may omit words, but don't leave out any important information.
- 3) You may change words. For example, you may change a noun to a pronoun or make a singular word plural.
- 4) You may add words. For example, in example 2, you need to add the connecting word *and*.

Your goal is to write smooth, grammatically correct sentences that contain all the information but do not repeat any of it.

e.g.

- a) I am a man.
- b) I am famous. - Combined sentence: I am a famous man.

*I am a man and I am famous* is a grammatically correct sentence, but a native speaker would not write it because a native speaker would not repeat the words *I am*. Another possible sentence is *I am a man who is famous*, but this sentence contains unnecessary words.

- a) I have white hair.
- b) I have a long white beard. - Combined sentence: I have white hair and a long white beard.

You must keep the word *white* in the expressions *white hair* and a *long white beard* because it is important information.

## 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.
3. Names of people and their titles.	King Charles, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Simpson
<b>BUT NOT</b> a title without a name.	He's a king. Have you met your math professor?
<i>Exception:</i> A title without a name is sometimes capitalized if it refers to a specific person.	The President of the United States had dinner with the Emperor of Japan.

<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>