

# ACADEMIC WRITING

What is “academic writing?”

When do you use academic writing?

## FOUR COMPONENTS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

1

ACADEMIC  
WRITING  
IS INQUIRY.



- Academic writing is often driven by a **research question**: what do you want to find out?
- Since you’re answering a question, it is important to **be open to learning** and possibly changing your mind based on what you find out. Academic writing should not be based on something you are not open to learning more about.
- To find out your answer, you must do **thorough research**.
- Academic writing is typically **not based on your opinion** or on anecdotal evidence (someone’s personal story that may not be tied to data or research).
- Don’t be afraid of **nuanced arguments or responses**. Few things are as black and white as they seem on the surface.

## 2

### ACADEMIC WRITING IS EVIDENCE- BASED.



Created by Claire Robinson  
for the Open Project

- In order to back up your claims, you must conduct thorough research to **cite and give credit to experts** in the field. Citing experts gives *you* credibility.
- For your expert sources, rely on **peer-reviewed, scholarly articles** found in the CI databases, Google scholar, or government websites. These places feature articles that have gone through a rigorous process of vetting, fact-checking, and peer review so you know you can rely on them.
- **Be sure not to “cherry pick”** meaning don’t just look for articles that back up your already formed opinion. That doesn’t equate to good research because you’re not giving an accurate picture of what’s known about a topic, and you’re not really learning anything new. Remember, you’re not backing up your opinion, you’re answering a question.
- NOTE: This doesn’t mean that any source that isn’t peer-reviewed is *false*, but it *does* mean that it’s *unreliable*. There is no real way of knowing whether or not it is true without that accountability of vetting, fact-checking, and peer review.

## 3

### ACADEMIC WRITING HAS A CERTAIN STYLE AND TONE.



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- **Make intentional rhetorical moves** AKA be conscious of the way you’re saying something, so that your audience receives your message the way you intended.
- **Follow citation and grammar rules.** Running a spelling and grammar check can go a long way, but it won’t catch everything. [Meet with a tutor](#) or use [our resources](#) for additional grammar and citation help.
- **Avoid colloquialisms** (“ain’t” or “gonna”). These are fine for everyday speech or casual writing, but they typically won’t serve you well in academic writing.
- **Style and tone can vary by discipline.** For example, the sciences value concise and accurate writing, whereas the humanities leave room for embellishment or even first person (“I” or “me”).
- The style and tone of academic writing covers the areas of **written papers, presentations, posters**, and even virtual forms of communication such as **email**.

# 4

## ACADEMIC WRITING MAKES LOGICAL SENSE.



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- Use peer-reviewed research **effectively to back up and validate your main points.**
- Use outlines, reverse outlines, and drafts to **create a well-organized piece of writing** that makes sense to the reader.
- Be sure to **use transition words and transition well between ideas** (don't assume your reader knows how you are connecting the dots - explain it to them).
- Test it out! Is it **understandable to a peer, colleague, or tutor?** If not, clarify the places where they get lost. Talking through your points aloud is a great way to do this. You can record yourself or have your tutor take notes so you can look back on what you said and write it into your paper or project.

For help with any part of the academic writing process, visit the WMC online at [www.csuci.edu/wmc](http://www.csuci.edu/wmc) or email us at [writing.tutors@csuci.edu](mailto:writing.tutors@csuci.edu)