

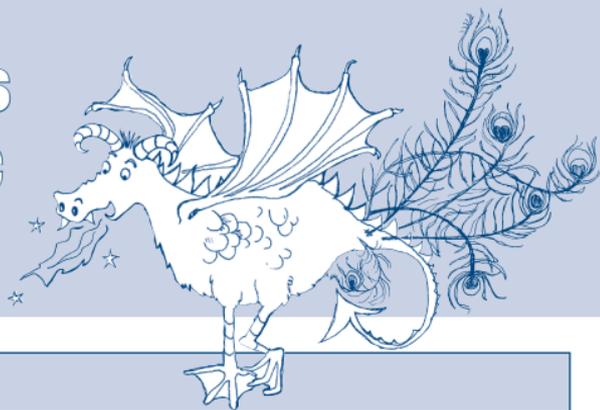
# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	ix	<b>Essential element 2: Use your sources effectively and correctly</b>	<b>31</b>
1 Myths and facts about academic writing	1	8 Using their words: quotations	32
2 What academic writing looks like	4	9 Using your words: paraphrase and source summary	40
3 Your writing context and purpose	7	10 Using verbs to show that you understand your sources	49
4 The five essential elements of writing	15	11 Referencing styles and techniques	54
Summary	17	12 How to avoid accidental plagiarism	59
<b>Essential element 1: Write critically</b>	<b>19</b>	Summary	64
5 What critical writing is	19		
6 What critical writing looks like	21		
7 Common errors in critical writing	25		
Summary	30		

<b>Essential element 3:</b>		<b>Essential element 5:</b>	
<b>Let your own voice shine through</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>Rewrite like an expert</b>	<b>99</b>
13 Making your own voice clear	65	21 The process of writing and rewriting	99
14 Using verbs to show your own position	68	22 Common language errors	102
15 Using 'I' and 'we'	71	23 A checklist	111
16 Expressing levels of certainty and caution	75	Summary	114
Summary	78	Final comments	115
<b>Essential element 4:</b>		<b>Useful sources</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Write for your reader</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>Index</b>	<b>118</b>
17 Having a clear overall structure	80		
18 Having clear paragraph structure	84		
19 Developing a clear writing style	87		
20 Using words precisely	96		
Summary	98		

## 1

# Myths and facts about academic writing



Myth	Fact
<p><b>1</b> Writing well is a talent you either have or don't have.</p>	<p>Writing well is not a natural gift but something that needs to be learnt and practised. You may struggle at first because the style and content of writing for university is new to you but you will improve steadily and may even start to enjoy it.</p>
<p><b>2</b> There is one standard way of writing at university.</p>	<p>Many aspects of writing are common across subjects and assignment types, but you do also need to develop an awareness of the more specialised characteristics of your subject, task type and tutor's approach<sup>1</sup> (see Chapter 3).</p>

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this book I use *discipline/subject*, *task/assignment* and *tutor/lecturer* interchangeably.

Myth	Fact
<p><b>3</b> You need to find out all you can on the topic or title and put it all into your assignment.</p>	<p>Your tutor wants to see that you can discriminate between relevant and non-relevant sources,<sup>2</sup> in other words that you can be selective in what you include in your assignment (see Chapters 5 and 6).</p>
<p><b>4</b> Writing critically is when you say what is negative or incorrect about something.</p>	<p>In the academic world, all knowledge, ideas and theories can be questioned, and there is rarely an absolute answer. Being critical means using this questioning process to comment on and evaluate something. Your evaluation may be negative or positive or both, or may simply highlight a different approach.</p>
<p><b>5</b> You should use lots of quotations.</p>	<p>The most highly valued way of using what you have read is to re-express and integrate it into your writing using your own words and style. You should use quotations for only a few specific reasons (see Chapters 8 and 9).</p>
<p><b>6</b> Being original means coming up with a totally new idea or making a new discovery.</p>	<p>At undergraduate level you are not expected to make a unique contribution to knowledge but to come to your own understanding of an issue. This unique understanding will arise naturally from how you decide to respond to your assignment title: your individual angle on it, which sources you select, how you use and evaluate these sources, and the conclusions you come to.</p>

<sup>2</sup> A *source* is anything you get information or ideas from: books, journal articles, websites, DVDs, lectures etc.

Myth	Fact
<p><b>7</b> You shouldn't say what you think or use 'I' in assignments.</p>	<p>Using 'I' to say what your evaluations and conclusions are is increasingly acceptable (but check with your tutor). Your tutor <i>does</i> want to know what you think, as long as you have formed your view through analysis and evaluation of evidence and viewpoints from other sources (see Chapter 15).</p>
<p><b>8</b> You don't need to explain things in your writing that your tutor already knows.</p>	<p>You do often need to be explicit in your writing so that your tutor can see that you have understood things. At undergraduate level, your assignments usually need to explain background information and terms in a way that an educated and intelligent non-expert reader would be able to understand.</p>
<p><b>9</b> Successful writing at university means writing in long sentences and using lots of long words.</p>	<p>Successful writing is precise, clear and to the point. This means that you do need to use more formal vocabulary but not overly complex words or sentences (see Chapters 19 and 20).</p>
<p><b>10</b> Successful writers think, then write, check and hand in.</p>	<p>Successful writers (including professional authors) make lots of mistakes and rewrite and correct their work many times before arriving at the final version (see Chapters 21–3).</p>

# Index

- assignment titles,
  - analysing, 12–14
  - content words, 12–14
  - function words, 12–14
  - scope, 12–14
  - top tips, 11
  - understanding, 10–14
- assignment types in different disciplines 8–9
  - highly valued aspects, 8–9
- clear communication, examples 4–5
- critical writing 19–24
  - analysis, 22
  - argument, 23
  - common errors in, 25–29
  - evaluation, 23
  - over generalising, 29
  - thinking and writing, 24
- editing, *see* rewriting and editing
- essay extracts, 4–6, 85–86
- final comments, 115–116
- five essential elements of academic writing, 15–16
- myths about academic writing, 1–3
- non-critical writing, 21–22
  - description, 21
  - explanation, 22
- paraphrase, 40–48 *see also* sources
- purpose and context of your writing, 7–9
- quotation, 32–39 *see also* sources
- referencing, 54–64
  - accidental plagiarism, avoiding, 59–64
  - emphasising different aspects of source, 55–56
  - styles, 54–55
  - ‘What went wrong here?’ exercise, 57
- rewriting and editing, 3, 99–101
  - checklist, 111–113

- editing, common language errors, 102–107
  - direct questions, 104
  - fragment sentences, 103
  - infinitive or gerund, 104
  - punctuation, 105–107
    - apostrophes, 106–107
    - commas, 105–106
      - with *that*, 105
      - with *which/who*, 105–106
  - run-on sentences, 104
  - subject–verb agreement, 103
  - the*, 105
  - verb tense, 103
  - word form, 102
- stages in the rewriting process, 100–101
- top tips, 11
- ‘What’s gone wrong here?’ exercise, 108–109
- sources, use in writing, 31–64
  - changes from original text, 45–48
  - paraphrase, 40–48
  - quotations, 32–39
  - summarising, 42–44, 48
  - things to watch out for, 48
  - ‘What went wrong here?’ exercise, 38–39
  - summary points at the end of each section
  - essential elements of academic writing, 17
  - let your own voice shine through, 78
  - rewrite like an expert, 114
  - use your sources, 64
  - write critically, 30
  - write for your reader, 98
- using words precisely, 96–98
- ‘What went wrong here?’ exercises and/or
  - examples of poor writing
    - draft paragraph, 108–109
    - using quotations, 38–39
    - using reference techniques, 57
    - using reporting verbs and phrases, 52–53
  - what your tutor wants, 10
  - write for your reader, 79–98
    - abstract nouns, overuse, 92
    - authenticity, 95
    - brevity, 90
    - clichés and phrases to not use, 88–89
    - form and formality, 88–89
    - noun phrases, 90–91
    - passive form, 92
    - power, 90–91

- precise use of words, 96–98
- sentence length, 93
- signposting language, 82–83
- structure, overall, 80–81
- structure, paragraph, 84–86
- style, 87–95
- succinctness, 94
- writing, good example of, 4–6
- written voice, own, 65–78
  - main points, 65
  - phrases for showing certainty and caution,  
75–77
  - reporting verbs, 68–69
  - showing your sources support your point,  
66
  - using ‘I’, 3, 71–72
  - using ‘we’, 73–74