

Academic tips and useful phrases

Cross out tips about academic writing below that you don't agree with, then compare with the rest of the class. With negative statements, crossing them off means that you shouldn't avoid those things.

- Put the most important information first
- Explain the structure of your writing in the introduction
- A new paragraph means a new topic
- Start most paragraphs with expressions meaning “First”, “Second”, “Next” and “Last”
- Use “At first” and “At last” to mean “Firstly” and “Last”
- Avoid starting sentences with “and” and “but”
- Use “On the other hand”, “Nevertheless” and “On the contrary” to mean “However”
- Use “this/ these” with nouns like “problem” and “theory” to link to previous sentences
- Use reference words and phrases rather than repeating the subject in later sentences
- Use reference phrases rather than repeating the subject in later paragraphs
- Avoid over-generalisations like “It is thought” and “Japanese people think”
- Avoid “I” and “we”
- Avoid “you”
- Avoid abbreviations associated with your area
- Avoid Latin abbreviations like e.g. and i.e.
- Explain jargon
- Avoid exclamation marks, using language to emphasise things instead
- Avoid strong words like “nonsense”, “ridiculous”, “terrible” and “must”
- Avoid rhetorical questions like “What should we do about this?”
- Avoid multi-word verbs like “sort out” and “chase after”
- Avoid short verbs with many meanings like “get” and “take”
- Avoid vague and over-used words like “very” and “really”
- Avoid contractions
- Avoid repeating signalling expressions like “however”, “because”, “for example”, “also”, “if”, “in particular”, “in other words”, “generally” and “clearly”

Brainstorm useful phrases for the ones that you haven't crossed off, including ways of avoiding the language which you think should be avoided.

Suggested answers

- Put the most important information first – **“The main/ most important/ most significant/ most obvious...” “the thing that stands out is...”**
- Explain the structure of your writing in the introduction – **“(In the paper) I will.../ This article will.../ The author will... and then...”**
- A new paragraph means a new topic – **“Moving on to.../ Looking at.../ Turning our attention to...”**
- Start most paragraphs with expressions meaning “First”, “Second”, “Next” and “Last” – **Probably not a good idea**
- Use “At first” and “At last” to mean “Firstly” and “Last” – **Not a good idea as they have different meanings**
- Avoid starting sentences with “and” and “but” – **“In addition” “Furthermore” “Moreover” “However” “In contrast”**
- Use “On the other hand”, “Nevertheless” and “On the contrary” to mean “However” – **Only if you are sure that is what you mean, as they are all more specific than “however”**
- Use “this/ these” with nouns like “problem” and “theory” to link to previous sentences – **“this issue/ idea/ concept/ argument/ point of view...”**
- Use reference words and phrases rather than repeating the subject in later sentences – **“it/ they/ this/ that/ these/ those/ one/ both” “The former”, “The latter”**
- Use reference phrases rather than repeating the subject in later paragraphs – **Not a good idea as paragraphs should be able to stand alone. It is better to paraphrase.**
- Avoid over-generalisations like “It is thought” and “Japanese people think” – **“The majority of people think...” “Reading newspapers would give you the impression that...”**
- Avoid “I” and “we” – **“The author(s)” “It was found that...”**
- Avoid “you” – **“The reader” “People reading this description” “People interested in this matter”**
- Avoid abbreviations associated with your area – **not necessary**
- Avoid Latin abbreviations like e.g. and i.e. – **not necessary**
- Explain jargon – **“that is (to say)...” “(...)” “usually defined as...” “used here to mean...”**
- Avoid exclamation marks, using language to emphasise things instead – **“surprisingly” “to the surprise of the researchers...” “indeed”**
- Avoid strong words like “nonsense”, “ridiculous”, “terrible” and “must” – **“debatable” “not desirable” “should probably”**
- Avoid rhetorical questions like “What should we do about this?” – **“many people may wonder what we should do about this”**
- Avoid multi-word verbs like “sort out” and “chase after” – **“resolve” “pursue”**
- Avoid short verbs with many meanings like “get” and “take” – **“obtain”**
- Avoid vague and over-used words like “very” and “really” – **“substantially” “significantly”**
- Avoid contractions – **“I am” “we have” etc.**
- Avoid repeating signalling expressions like “however”, “because”, “for example”, “also”, “if”, “in particular”, “in other words”, “generally” and “clearly” – **“although” “since” “for instance” “as well” “supposing” “particularly” “to put it another way” “in the majority of cases” “obviously”**