

Academic writing tips with useful phrases

Cross off any tips below which you (definitely, totally) disagree with. If you aren't sure or it depends, leave it as it is. Don't tick anything, just cross off ones that are obviously wrong.

Academic writing introductions tips with useful phrases

Start the introduction by answering the question which you have been set or you have set yourself ("I believe that the government's policy on..." etc).

Start the introduction by setting out the background to the question that you have been set or that you have set yourself ("In our globalised society,...", "Over the last few years,...", "For many people in modern society,...", "According to some recent research,...", "It has traditionally been believed that...", "Many people believe that...", "Until recently, it was thought that...", "Recently there has been much debate over...", "There are two very different points of view on the topic of...", etc).

In the middle of the introduction, you should paraphrase the question which you have been set or you have set yourself ("However, is really true that...?", "This paper aims to judge the real influence of...", "It has not, however, been conclusively shown if these results are also true for...", etc).

At the end of the introduction, you should set out the structure of the body of the writing ("I will look at the advantages and disadvantages of this approach below", "Three reasons for this view are given below", "This essay will look at the advantages of the first approach and the disadvantages of the second approach, in that order", etc).

Body of academic writing tips with useful phrases

You should usually start the first paragraph of the body of the writing with "Firstly,...", "First (of all),...", etc.

You can start the first paragraph of the body with expressions for changing topic like "As for...", "Turning (our attention) to..." and "Moving onto..."

You can start the first paragraph with general giving the topic phrases like "Looking at...", "If we look at..." and "On the topic of..."

It's good to start paragraphs and the whole piece of writing with the most important information ("The main/ most important/ most significant/ most obvious...", "The thing that stands out is...", etc).

Start subsequent paragraphs or sections with other number-based expressions ("Secondly,...", "Thirdly,...", "Fourth,...", etc).

Start the last paragraph or section of the body with expressions explaining its final position like "Finally,...", "Lastly,...", and "Last of all,...".

Use as many linking expressions ("However,...", "Therefore,...", "Subsequently,...", "For example,...", "In addition,...", "... because", "unless", "i.e.", "in conclusion", "in order to", etc) as you can.

It is okay to just repeat the same few linking expressions, e.g. "...also..." every time that you want to add another similar idea.

"However", "On the other hand", "In contrast" and "On the contrary" all have the same meanings.

Some linking expressions like "because", "but", "whereas" and "and" should be used to link two ideas in one sentence (so not two ideas in two different sentences).

Avoid all abbreviations (acronyms etc, such as "NATO", "asap", "NB", "OK", "info", "etc", "e.g.", "i.e.", "c.f.", "pp.", "ca.", "ibid", "par. 2", and "fig. 1")

Avoid jargon and foreign expressions that general readers wouldn't understand like "biomechanics", "post-structuralism" and "parasite singles".

Put jargon and foreign words that general readers wouldn't understand in italics or quotation marks the first time that you use them, then define their meanings with phrases like "This is usually defined as...", "According to the 2007 edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, this means...", "..., used here to mean...", and "... used in this paper with the specific meaning of...".

English speakers don't like repeating words, so you should rephrase as much as possible ("important"/ "vital"/ "crucial"/ "essential", "problem"/ "issue"/ "barrier", "advantage"/ "selling point"/ "benefit"/ "positive aspect", "etc)

You should also try to avoid repeating jargon, using similar expressions like "the climate"/ "our weather"/ "weather systems" instead.

Use brackets (), quotation marks "", underlining, **bold script**, or CAPITAL LETTERS to emphasise important information.

Use language like "Please note that...", "It is important to note that..." and "NB..." to emphasise important information.

To show your objectivity, it is best to use passive expressions without a subject such as "It is thought that...", "It has been shown that..." and "... is considered to be..."

To make your writing persuasive, it is best to use a range of different support for your arguments, e.g. examples ("...e.g...", "A good example of this is..."), quotations ("... said that...", "According to..."), logical arguments ("... inevitably causes...", "... obviously means that..."), rephrasing and explaining further ("To put that another way,...", "...i.e....", etc), comparing ("This is significantly more... than...", "In complete contrast to this,...", etc), referring to data and/ or visuals ("As can be seen from the line graph,...", etc), and personal experience ("The author found that...", "Comparing this to my own experience,...", etc)

Academic vocabulary tends to be long Latin-based words, often with prefixes and suffixes like “re-” and “-less”, rather than collections of short words such as phrasal verbs (“get on with”) and other idioms. For example, it’s better to write “the elderly” rather than “old people”, “obtain” rather than “get”, “pursue” rather than “chase after”, “artificial” rather than “man-made”, and “substantial” rather than “quite a lot”.

Referencing in academic writing tips with useful phrases

You can usually choose any system of academic referencing that you like, e.g. numbers in square brackets (“[1]” etc) or family name plus page number in circular brackets (“(Smith, 1976)” etc).

Quoting directly (“Smith (2001) wrote that...”) is always better than paraphrasing (“Smith believed that...”)

Only sources which are cited in the paper should be included in the list of references.

Punctuation in Academic Writing tips

Single quotation marks (‘’) and double quotation marks (“”) have completely different meanings, so you need to be careful which ones you use at each point.

Even native speakers have problems using semi colons (;) correctly, so it’s best to avoid them as much as possible, usually just by starting a new sentence.

Some punctuation such as contractions (“I’m”, “We’ve”, etc), dashes (“–”) and exclamation marks (“!” and “!!”) are considered too informal for most academic writing.

Ending academic writing tips with useful phrases

A final paragraph can be a summary of the information given in the body of the writing (“To summarise the information given above,...”, etc) and/ or a conclusion leading on from the information given in the body (“Although I have shown both benefits and drawbacks to this approach, I believe that for most people the most important factor is... and therefore the pros outweigh the cons”).

It is okay to avoid any clear conclusion in your writing (“As I have shown above, there are both arguments for and against this course of action and which is better depends on the circumstances”, etc).

Hint: There should be 17 crosses above.

Compare your answers as a class or with the answer key.

Ask about any tips or language above which you aren’t sure about.

Answer key

The underlined ones below are not good advice.

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It is okay to avoid any clear conclusion in your writing (“As I have shown above, there are both arguments for and against this course of action and which is better depends on the circumstances”, etc).

Brainstorming stage

Without looking above, brainstorm useful phrases to do the things mentioned below. Many phrases not above are also possible.

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Start the introduction by setting out the background to the question that you have been set or have set yourself

(_____).

In the middle of the introduction, you should paraphrase the question which you have been set or you have set yourself (_____).

At the end of the introduction, you should set out the structure of the body of the writing

(_____)

Body of academic writing tips with useful phrases

You can start the first paragraph with general giving the topic phrases like _____

It's good to start paragraphs and the whole piece of writing with the most important information (_____).

Some linking expressions like _____ should be used to link two ideas in one sentence (so not two ideas in two different sentences).

Put jargon and foreign words that general readers wouldn't understand in italics or quotation marks the first time that you use them, then define their meanings with phrases like _____

English speakers don't like repeating words, so you should rephrase as much as possible

("important"/ _____,
"problem"/ _____,
"advantage"/ _____)

Use language like _____

to emphasise important information.

To make your writing persuasive, it is best to use a range of different support for your arguments, e.g. examples (_____),
quotations (_____),
logical arguments (_____),
rephrasing and explaining further (_____),
comparing (_____),
referring to data and/ or visuals (_____),
and personal experience (_____)

Referencing in academic writing tips with useful phrases

You can usually choose any system of academic referencing that you like, e.g. numbers in square brackets (_____ etc) or family name plus page number in circular brackets (“(_____)” etc).

Quoting directly (_____) is always better than paraphrasing (_____)

Punctuation in Academic Writing tips

Some punctuation such as contractions (_____ , etc), dashes (“-”) and exclamation marks (_____) are considered too informal for most academic writing.

Ending academic writing tips with useful phrases

A final paragraph can be a summary of the information given in the body of the writing (“ _____ ,...”, etc) and/ or a conclusion leading on from the information given in the body (“ _____ ”).

Compare your phrases with those on the worksheets above. Many other phrases are possible, so please check with your teacher if you wrote something different.