

Key principles of Academic Writing

Academic writing communicates research, ideas and/or arguments to an informed community of readers in the appropriate language. It has five simple key principles.

1. Answers a question within the field

Example: Outline the stresses that university students experience at undergraduate level and discuss the ways in which these impact upon academic success.

2. Is written in the third-person

✗ I am really worried about my time management skills and haven't a clue how much time I should spend on academic work.

✓ A major concern for students adapting to life at university is how to effectively manage their time.

3. Is supported by evidence-based points

✗ Everyone worries about how to manage their time at university and gets very stressed about all the work lecturers force them to do.

✓ In a recent study, van de Meer et al. (2010) found that time management was a concern for almost 27% of students surveyed. Students worried about their ability to “keep up” with the workload at university (van de Meer et al., 2010, p.782).

4. Uses formal and objective language

✗ The best thing for us would be to learn to manage our time because then we wouldn't be up the walls about all the stuff we have to do.

✓ Effective time management can lead to more efficient study time and give students a sense of control over their work (Kearns and Gardiner, 2007). Häfner et al. (2014) note that undergraduates who received time management training and implemented these skills perceived a decrease in their stress levels.

5. Has clear and logical structure

✓ A major concern for students adapting to life at university is how to effectively manage their time. In a recent study, van de Meer et al. (2010) found that time management was a concern for almost 27% of students surveyed. In particular, students worried about their ability to “keep up” with the workload at university (van de Meer et al., 2010, p.782). Learning how to manage time can, however, have positive outcomes for university students. Indeed, effective time management can lead to more efficient study time and give students a sense of control over their work (Kearns and Gardiner, 2007). Moreover, Häfner et al. (2014) note that undergraduates who received time management training and implemented these skills perceived a decrease in their stress levels. Thus, while time management is a concern for undergraduates, it is possible for students to develop good skills in this area and improve their academic performance as a result.

Do

- Answer (all parts of) the question asked.
- Support your points with evidence.
- Use connecting words like 'Moreover', 'Thus', 'In particular' etc. to help work to flow.
- Check that all sources are cited correctly.
- Check all spelling and grammar.

Do not

- Make generalisations (e.g. 'Everyone worries about how to manage their time').
- Use subjective language without evidence (e.g. 'The best thing for us to do').
- Use contractions (e.g. 'wouldn't', 'don't', 'can't', 'it's').
- Use colloquial phrases or slang (e.g. 'up the walls').

Key Principles adapted from Learn Higher (2012) [What is academic writing?](#) Available under [Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)