

## Finding Your Voice In Academic Writing

### What is voice?

In writing, “voice” refers to the elements of your writing that make it distinctively your writing. Things like word choice, tone, and even punctuation all add together create your style and voice. These elements of your style can convey your attitude, personality, or opinion. All of these aspects combine to create your unique style of writing, *voice*, and can even change depending on the type of writing or situation.

Note: While drafting, it is often easiest to first express your ideas in a more informal voice, and then adjust the language and syntax to a more formal or academic style as part of the revision process.

### Types of Voice

**Informal Voice** - When you are writing an email to your friends you may be more relaxed in your speech, which can express a closeness to the reader. You may choose words that aren't as formal as you would if you were writing to a professor, or you may show your excitement with lots of exclamation points.

For Example

Informal: “I have a lot of homework this weekend!!”

Formal: “This weekend I have a substantial amount of assignments.”

**Formal Voice** - When using a formal voice the writer can show either their respect for the reader or the seriousness of the content. The tone of formal voice will often be the one used in professional situations.

For Example

Informal: “What did he say in lecture again?”

Formal: “Dear Professor Smith, I am writing to ask a question about the lecture.”

**Academic Voice** - When writing an essay for a class, this is most likely the voice you will use depending on the instructions of your assignment. You will be writing in a formal tone and concise phrasing while showing your ability to clearly state what you know and how you know it. This is used to argue your evidence proving your point on your topic. If you are reviewing someone else's work, you will want to use academic voice to remove your opinions and instead present a more objective representation of the topic.

For Example

Informal: “We'll use teams to make the work go faster.”

Formal: “The utilization of teams will greatly impact the speed at which we can execute the tasks needed to complete the assignment .”

Academic: “By creating teams, the students will execute tasks more efficiently.”



Psst! Hey!  
Stop by CLAS  
to have a writing  
tutor review this  
with you!!

## Tips & Examples For Using Academic Voice

- ❖ Consider your audience. If it is a professor, then the point of the writing is to show what you have learned and that you can talk about what you have learned. For a research paper, you want to sound like you know what you are talking about, which can be demonstrated with clear organization and arguments.

For Example

Informal: "You can tell she likes reading because she talks a lot about books."

Academic: "Her vast personal library displayed her passion for literature."

- ❖ Don't use first person pronouns unless your assignment is specifically looking for your personal ideas. For a research paper or assignments where you are not discussing your own opinion, you need to state the facts and analyze them. Make sure that you are keeping a formal tone no matter your personal feelings.

For Example

Formal: "I think everyone should recycle plastic and have reusable tote bags."

Academic: "Recycling and reusable tote bags should be required."

- ❖ Just because the vocabulary of the academic voice leans toward "considerable" and away from "a lot" doesn't mean that you need to write extra long sentences full of long vocabulary words. Always look for ways to make your sentences clean and concise.

For Example

Formal: "I think everyone should recycle plastic and have reusable tote bags."

Academic: "Recycling and reusable tote bags should be required."

- ❖ Stay away from second person pronouns.

For Example

Formal: "When you look at the chart above, you will see the annual increase."

Academic: "Reviewing the chart above, readers will notice the annual increase."

- ❖ Typically you won't want to use contractions in your writing.

For Example

Formal: "It shouldn't be difficult to see the annual increase in fees."

Academic: "It should not be difficult to see the significant raise in annual fees."

### Practice

Sentence: I think working in teams is better because you can get things done faster.

Informal:

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Formal:

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Academic:

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