

ACADEMIC WRITING STYLE – EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

Identify the informal expressions in the following sentences.

1. With women especially, there is a lot of social pressure to conform to a certain physical shape.
2. Significantly, even at this late date, Lautrec was considered a bit conservative by his peers.
3. It focused on a subject that a lot of the bourgeois and upper-class exhibition-going public regarded as anti-social and anti-establishment.
4. Later Florey got together with Paul Fildes in an experimental study of the use of curare to relieve the intractable muscular spasms which occur in fully developed infection with tetanus or lockjaw.
5. When a patient is admitted to a psychiatric inpatient unit, the clinical team should avoid the temptation to start specific treatments immediately.
6. Therefore after six months the dieter is behaving according to all twenty-six goals and she has achieved a big reduction in sugar intake.
7. Modern houses have so many labour-saving things that it is difficult for the person at home to have adequate exercise by doing chores, cooking, and looking after a family.
8. Simply making the effort to reclaim this wasted stuff for fertilizer would have a positive effect on greenhouse releases.
9. It is difficult to imagine exactly what is meant by saying that such a classification is natural as any collection of things could be classified in this way.
10. Unfortunately, since there are so many possible explanations, the correct one is most difficult to find out.

EXERCISE 2

Avoiding two word verbs

There is often a choice in English between a two word verb and a single verb - bring up/raise, set up/establish. Rewrite the following sentences, replacing the *informal two-word verb* with a more formal equivalent.

1. A primary education system was *set up* throughout Ireland as early as 1831
2. This will *cut down* the amount of drug required and so the cost of treatment.
3. The material amenities of life have *gone up* in Western society.
4. The press reflected the living culture of the people; it could influence opinion and reinforce existing attitudes but it did not *come up with* new forms of entertainment.
5. Thus, he should have *looked into* how the patient has coped previously.
6. The aggregate of outstanding balances *went up and down* quite violently.
7. The court thinks it just and equitable to *give back* the property.
8. Dieters often feel that they should totally *get rid of* high-fat and high-sugar foods.
9. Thus when a Gallic bishop in 576 converted the local Jewish community to Christianity, those who *turned down* baptism were expelled from the city.

10. Western scholars gradually *turned out* a corpus of translations from the Arabic and studies of Islam.

EXERCISE 3

Degree of Formality

These texts differ in formality. One of the reasons for this difference is the different audiences they are targeting. Read the texts below carefully and then rank them from most formal (1), to most informal (4).

- A. Why write essays? In the modern world our thinking is largely transmitted by speech and through radio and television. At the university, however, you are required to do much of your thinking through writing. In the Humanities and Social Sciences you are inevitably required to produce a considerable number of essays.
- B. It might be said that in-vitro fertilisation, at any age, is a matter of free choice, especially if the patient pays. If a woman wants the procedure, age should be irrelevant. But age can never be totally irrelevant. The line is unclear. But in the case of older mothers, questions of the "best interest of the child" press more insistently. And even when the patient pays something towards the cost of these procedures, there is some cost to the public. The issue of resource allocation remains.
- C. In many radiotherapy centres where planning for external beam treatments is performed by radiation therapists, the treatment sheet and its calculations are independently checked by staff from a different educational background, typically a radiotherapy physicist. The benefits of this practice were evaluated in a radiotherapy department with two linear accelerators: one combined superficial-orthovoltage unit and one telecaesium unit.
- D. It's a real shame that something as simple as a diet was not taken account of by nurses, thus causing unnecessary pain to the patient. It probably caused even more pain to the patient's family and friends having to see their loved one die like that. How would we feel if we saw our own relative go through that experience?
- E. A major challenge in the national water plan is to determine the trade-offs between the costs of action (such as infrastructure improvements) designed to overcome water problems (such as too much water seepage and evaporation) with the public benefits (such as larger water flows downstream) of such actions.

EXERCISE 4

Rewrite the following paragraphs using language common in academic writing.

1. *The Three Tissue Systems of a Plant*

The cells of a plant have three tissues: dermal, vascular, and ground. Each is throughout the plant. But they come in different places. We will explain all three from a young plant with bark. The dermal is like skin on your body. The vascular is the part that puts food in your mouth. And the ground is the part that stores, supports, and makes it green.

2. Cultural Differences in Friendship

Hey, it's true. Your friendships and how you look at them depend on your culture. For example, in the U.S. you can be friends with someone, yet not really be expected to go and party with them. Many Middle Easterners, Asians, and Latinos would consider going out of their way a cool and essential thing to do for friends. If you are not willing to sacrifice for your friend, then that person is not really your bud.

3. Computer Crime

The term *hacker* used to mean a person with lots of computer smarts, but the term has taken on a more sinister meaning due to true computer criminals. However, most times hackers do not try to steal your money or land. But they create fake accounts and destroy or change files. They think it's funny to mess up your e-mail. Or they want to show off or bug people they don't like. They have invaded Web sites and put dumb jokes on them. They think of their activities as mere pranks.

4. Family-Based Groups

In some societies, the family is the "top dog." An individual's acceptance in society is based on the family's wealth and status, rather than the individual's achievement. Because the family is so "tight," those outside the family are distrusted. In China and southern Italy, families are like a clique. They take care of their own. So companies made up of relatives are more successful than those with a bunch of people who aren't related. This makes it difficult for big companies to make much "moola" in those countries.

5. Alcoholism and the Learning Model

Alcoholism is more likely to occur in societies that forbid children to drink but where it is okay for adults to get drunk (Ireland), than in societies that teach children how to drink responsibly (France, Greece). In cultures with low rates of drunkenness, adults drink and introduce kids to drinking at the family dinner table. Alcohol is not used to mean you are now grown-up, nor is it associated with being the "big man." You don't laugh at people who don't drink, and you don't think getting drunk is cute, funny, or manly; people who get bombed are considered dumb and obnoxious.