

Academic Audience

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Helpful Tips on Writing for an Academic Audience

It's important to remember that different audiences require different writing styles—you should write your Facebook status updates differently than your college papers, for instance. Here are some tips on how to write for an academic audience:

<p>FACEBOOK: We use “very,” “really,” “so,” etc. as adverbs.</p> <p><i>That movie was so good, and the previews were really cool.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: Why say someone is “very smart” when you can say “clever,” “intelligent,” or “perceptive”? 99% of the time you can use one descriptive word instead of two simple words, making your writing tighter and more precise.</p>
<p>FACEBOOK: We use “you,” “us,” “our,” and “we.”</p> <p><i>You should come with us to Yogurtland after the study group at our place! We can sample all the flavors!</i></p> <p><i>The research indicates that we should all go to bed sooner and get up earlier.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: Using the word “you” in your paper instantly makes the paper into a sort of conversation because you are involving a second person (the reader), as opposed to writing an objective report on an academic subject.</p> <p>Same principle applies with “us,” “our,” and “we.” The only time it would really be acceptable to use these would be if you were specifically referring to an already established group of which you are a part. So, for example, “The nursing group I was a member of set out to establish these three theories. Our purpose for establishing these was to...”</p>
<p>FACEBOOK: We use clichés.</p> <p><i>Look at the bright side, hit the nail on the head, hold candle to, it's raining cats and dogs, if you know what I mean, etc. ad nauseum</i></p> <p>We also use conversational phrases.</p> <p><i>You see, the thing is, as far as I know, for what it's worth, etc.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: Don't. Just don't. You aren't being funny or clever and you aren't making any new friends by using clichés. Seriously, though, clichés come up in writing way more than you might think. If you are wondering if a phrase is a cliché or not, just think, “Does this phrase actually mean anything, or am I just saying it because I really can't think of a more accurate way to say what I should say?” Google is your friend.</p> <p>These are simply too casual and not specific enough. Always be specific! Say what you mean to say!</p>

<p>FACEBOOK: We use the same word over and over and over again.</p> <p><i>He says, she says, then he says again.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: Usually, this happens with the word “says,” when someone is quoting an author who says “this.” Then, the author says “that.” However, there is another author that says “over here!”</p> <p>“Says” can be appropriate, but try to add a bit more variety or be more specific when introducing a quote. Words like “explained,” “demonstrated,” and “described” are all usually better than “says” and, actually, mean slightly different things.</p>
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<p>FACEBOOK: We use contractions.</p> <p><i>Don't, I'd, wouldn't, would've, hadn't, etc.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: Just spell the words out. It isn't hard to do (though sometimes hard to notice!) and takes your level of writing up an academic notch.</p>
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<p>FACEBOOK: We use “There is/are,” especially at the beginning of a sentence.</p> <p><i>There is a dog sitting on the bench.</i></p> <p><i>There is a study that indicates such and such.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: If you ever see a sentence that starts with “There is” or “There are,” 99% of the time there is a better and more specific way to talk about whatever it is you were going to talk about. Instead of stating the thing's existence with a “There is,” say something about the thing itself.</p> <p><i>The dog sitting on the bench licked her toes as the sun shone down upon her face.</i></p> <p><i>The study conducted by so and so indicated such and such doing this and that.</i></p>
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<p>FACEBOOK/UNINFORMED WRITING: We end a paragraph with a quote or we start a paragraph with a quote.</p> <p><i>The dog continued to lick her toes, soaking up the sun's rays. This behavior can likely be explained by Doge's (2013) theory, which states, “etc. etc. etc.” (p. 333).</i></p> <p><i>The bulk of the research, which has recently been led by Doge (2014), indicates this and that.</i></p>	<p>COLLEGE PAPERS: You are being assigned to write a paper to demonstrate your writing abilities, not the abilities of another brilliant writer. Thus, <i>your</i> writing should be the focus of every paragraph you write. By putting quotes at the end or the beginning of the paragraph you aren't allowing your voice/analysis to be heard.</p> <p><i>Always</i> make sure you introduce and analyze a quote. In fact, people often quote too much. If you can, paraphrase! It demonstrates you know the quote well enough to be able to state it in your own words. But don't forget to cite it.</p>
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