Academic Writing Tips

I. Markers’ Perspective
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Markers’ Perspective

What do Markers (and Readers in General) Look For?
• Understanding of the problem
• Completion and cohesion of the project
• Knowledge of the literature
• Critical evaluation of previous work
• Critical evaluation of own work
• Depth and novelty of work

Average Time Spent
• 30 min to 2h depending on the assignment

Key Initial Considerations
• Language/writing quality and comprehensibility
• Assignment/text structure
Writing Tips

Does Language Feature in Markers’ Feedback?

- Academic writing is highly standardised
- The simpler the better!
- ‘Loser’s games’ vs. ‘Winner’s games’

Examples of feedback on language/writing?

- “The writing in the dissertation is clear enough to understand but in places the English is not in the academic style”
- …with informal language like…
- “The English descriptions of the work are often unclear and more importantly many descriptions should have been much more precise, but leave the reader guessing as to precisely what was done”
General Tips for Writing

It is a process

• Start early and iterate – writing is a process!
• Don’t waste time on getting the language right in the first draft – leave that for the proofreading stage.
• Write and exercise frequently
• Keep it focused: Ask “What does my reader need to hear about?” (not “What should I write about?”)
  • Can you state the research question and its answer in a sentence or two?
  • Keep polishing off your research question, as it defines the focus and relevance of your article

Three tips to improve the clarity in your writing

1. Eliminate unnecessary wording and repetition
2. Use conventional terms and notations
Eliminate empty words or phrases

- *There seems to be* some evidence to suggest …
- **Better:** Some evidence suggests…

Delete unnecessary qualifiers

- Because *a great many* of the words in this sentence are *basically* unnecessary, it would *really* be a *very good idea* to edit *somewhat* for conciseness.
- **Better:** Because many of the words in this sentence are unnecessary, we should edit it.

Avoid unnecessary nominalization

- Regular reviews of online content *should be scheduled*.
- **Better:** Online content should be reviewed regularly.
Use Conventional Terms and Notations

https://www.unm.edu/~ckbutler/ps541/MathNotation.pdf

https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/awllists/

https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/
English Language Education
https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/insession-courses/elsis

Courses for Postgraduate Students
https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/insession-courses/elsis/elsis-courses-pgt

Grammar for Academic Writing
https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/insession-courses/elsis/elsis-courses-pgt/grammar-for-academic-writing

Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development

IAD Open Workshops
https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/taught/courses-events
Purdue Online Writing Lab
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

Using English for Academic Purposes
http://www.uefap.net/

Academic Word list
https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/awllists/

Duke Graduate School Scientific Writing
https://sites.duke.edu/scientificwriting/lesson-1-subjects-and-actions/

Academic Phrase Bank
https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/
• Quick activity to work on either individually or in pairs
• Match the concepts with their definitions (and examples)
• **Link to exercise**
Thank you!