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Depending on context, *become* and *acquire* are good substitutes.

**Avoid abbreviations** except within parentheses or in footnotes: *etc.* = *and so on*; *e.g.* = *for example*; *i.e.* = *in other words*; *viz.* = *namely*.

**Start with strength.** *There is* and *There was* are unengaging, nonspecific ways to begin statements. Make sure that the beginnings of your sentences are engaging.

**Don't be "scared."** Placing quotation marks around terms is not an ideal way to indicate your skepticism. Instead, try using words to express distance: *so-called history*. See more of TWEED's advice at <http://tweedediting.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/scared/>

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With personal and professional experience in higher education, TWEED answers the call of the scholarly writer, offering editing tailored for academic success. Katie Van Heest, M.A., has a certificate in editing from the University of Chicago and offers an affordable range of services for scholars and students.

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editing tailored to the academic

## GUIDE to ACADEMIC STYLE

### *What is academic style?*

Broadly defined, *academic style* encompasses all of the syntactical, grammatical, and tone-related indicators of scholarly writing. Attention to style signals to your readers that you are serious about your research.

### *Use jargon strategically*

Technical terminology is a hallmark of academic writing. Though *jargon* is often used pejoratively, you cannot completely avoid specialized language. Limit your use of jargon so that it enhances rather than detracts from your writing.

**Know your audience.** How much jargon can your readers tolerate?

**Don't overqualify** with adjectives, contingencies, and prepositional phrases.

Academic writing works against its own goals when points are obscured.

**Read your work** to a friend outside of your discipline.

**Define your terms.** Doing so will make you tire of using jargon.

**Use analogies.** If you can think of a simple real-world equivalent of a complex idea, invoke it.

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## ✧ CRAFTING *your* ACADEMIC VOICE ✧

You know that your research and ideas are exciting. Paying attention to syntax, grammar, and tone can make that enthusiasm contagious.

**Don't overstate your claims.** Build readers' trust by being prudently conservative in your depictions and points. If you are precise in your argumentation, your thesis holds more weight.

**Avoid value judgments.** In a book review, you might evaluate how "good" a source is, but otherwise stick to substantive description that advances your argument. For example, use *excellent* and *great* with caution.

**Remove meaningless elements.** Is every sentence—and every sentence *part*—adding to your argument? Nuance is important, but be critical of tangents and unimportant details.

**Understand bias-free language and use it.** Don't assume the demographics of your audience, either. Refer to *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association's* comprehensive section on bias.

**Employ active voice** wherever possible. Passive voice does have a place in academic writing (especially in the social sciences), but if you can make your point actively, do so. Passive voice masks the subject of a sentence. Consider the differences: *Farmers were pushed off their land* / *Farmers were pushed off their land by wealthy elites* / *Wealthy elites pushed farmers off their land.*

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## ✧ PARTICULARS *of* ACADEMIC STYLE ✧

Refer to these specific tips for elevating your academic writing.

**Be conservative in your use of first- and second-person pronouns.**

Referring to your reader or to humanity in general with pronouns such as *you* and *your* sounds conversational and unprofessional. The use of *I* is appropriate when used in a limited way. Similarly, adopting a professorial voice by using *we* can be effective. Those in the social sciences, though, should only employ *we* and *our* to refer to the researchers.

**Try adhering to the old rule of not ending a sentence or clause with a preposition.**

For example, change *the rules she lives by* to *the rules by which she lives*. Sometimes using a preposition + *which* or *whom* will sound contrived. Weigh clarity concerns against the value of precision.

**Use the serial comma.** Whenever you list three or more items, insert a comma before the conjunction and final item, as in this example: *theory, methodology, and results*. In more complicated lists, the serial comma becomes absolutely essential, so use it consistently in *all* lists.

**Know the difference between that and which.** These relative pronouns actually serve different purposes. *That* is used with restrictive clauses; *which* with nonrestrictive clauses. Understand these distinctions—don't simply use *which* because it seems smarter.

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