

# LEAP Online

Learning Excellence Achievement Pathway Online Tutorial



## An Introduction to Academic Writing

LEAP Online

Academic Writing: The Process (Level 2)

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## Introduction

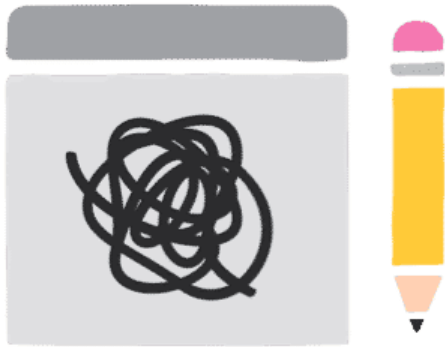
Academic writing can be a challenging prospect for most University students, especially for individuals new to writing at this level. However, it is a core skill that students at the University of Bolton need to learn, since it forms part of academic assessment.

As outlined in the General Assessment Guidelines, which will be examined shortly, as you advance through your course at the University, there is an expectation that your 'Written English' will continue to improve. Specifically, there is a strong emphasis on your writing style, spelling, punctuation and grammar and other academic conventions.

Furthermore, depending on the task, you will be expected to adapt your writing style. For example, University of Bolton assessments incorporate different writing styles, whereby you may be asked to flip between personal reflections to a critical analysis. Therefore, it is important that you have the underpinning knowledge to help you move between the different writing styles and achieve the higher-grades.

If all of this sounds slightly alien to you right now, please do not worry. This Tutorial aims to introduce you to academic writing with a definition and the main characteristics and steps you can take to start developing your academic writing skills.

## What is Academic Writing?



### Pause and Reflect

Think about what the following words have in common.

- Journal Article
- Narrative/story
- Poem
- Letter
- Diary entry
- Research projects
- Reflective writing

They are all different types of writing!

As demonstrated by the above list, we write for a variety of reasons. Therefore, it's important that we adjust our writing to ensure it is suitable for the audience.

Academic writing is no different.

The term 'academic writing' can be defined as writing that will allow you to communicate your ideas and opinion, information and research to the academic community at the University and beyond (English Academic Purpose, 2021).

At the University of Bolton, students are largely assessed on their ability to write, therefore, academic writing skills are a fundamental component of academic success.

To demonstrate learning throughout your studies, you may be required to produce different types of writing, for example: essays, reports, dissertations, action research projects, blogs, vlogs, etc. While each programme has specific writing conventions and types of discourse, there are some general characteristics of scholarly work.

**Let's look at these characteristics in greater detail.**

## Clear Focus and Planning



Firstly, effective academic writing can be characterised by the clear focus to define the purpose of your writing. In other words, you are required to write for a specific purpose.

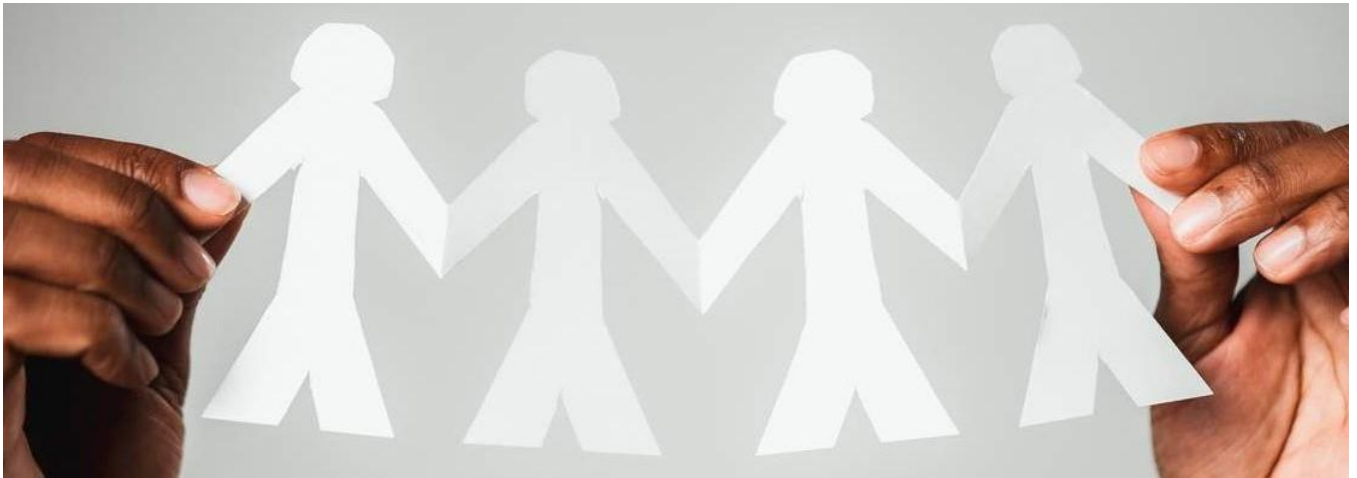
To achieve this aim, you will need to carry out in-depth research into the topic area, from which you can plan your assignment accordingly.

The Module Guide, which you will receive at the beginning of a new module, will help you to prepare and answer the learning outcomes set for you.

As you will note from the Module Guide, formal academic writing tasks at the University are set by, and written for, academic staff or assessors, and there is clear criteria against which your work will be marked. The General Assessment Guidelines, which can be found within the Module Guide, set out the marking criteria for your level of study.

The next section of the Academic Writing tutorial will provide useful tips to help you plan your assignment.

## Consider the Audience



The reader of your assignment is also known as the 'audience.' We communicate differently with different people we meet.

When you're writing, try to imagine you're writing for a larger audience, who might:

- Not have the same level of subject knowledge as your Module Tutor.
- Not have the same level of experience as you.

By having these points and the audience in mind, will help you to structure your writing appropriately. There's more on this area later in this LEAP Online section.

**In the next section we will explore different genres and writing styles used at the University of Bolton.**

## Genres and Writing Styles



As part of the writing process, you will need to consider the genre of writing e.g., an essay and the writing style e.g., a reflective essay, including the structure and format of the same.

University of Bolton students will be asked to write using different genres and writing styles, including, but not limited to:

- Essay writing
- Reflective essay
- Report writing
- Descriptive writing
- Comparative analysis/evaluation
- Argumentative writing

Let's look at the different genres and writing styles above in more detail.



## Essay writing

### 1. Definition

According to Cottrell (2019) an essay is defined as an assignment that is intended to focus your reading and thinking on a specific area. Often, you will engage in a critical analysis on a topic area that will require you to present your position on the topic by forming a compelling argument.

### 2. Purpose

- Essays will allow you to:
- Present your ideas on a subject
- Elaborate on your ideas
- Develop your communication skills
- Write with greater precision
- Develop writing skills that will support you at University and in work-related contexts.

As you progress through your studies, the standard of expectations on essay writing will rise and may include more complex subjects that will challenge your higher order thinking skills e.g., to critically analyse. (Cottrell, 2019)

### 3. Structure

The structure often derives from the genre of writing (English Academic Purpose, 2021). Generally, if you're asked to write an essay, it should include an introduction, with the main body separated into focused paragraphs, finishing with a conclusion. Generally, organisational features, such as bullet points and subheadings are excluded.

## 4. Preliminaries

### **Title page**

#### **Purpose**

Students at the University of Bolton are expected to include a title page that contains key information that helps the reader to identify the contents and author of their work.

#### **Structure**

Generally, a title page should include the following information: Programme name

Module title Assessment title Your student number Your marking tutor Date of submission

Always check with your Module Tutor to ensure all information has been included.

## 5. Introduction

Some experienced academic writers believe writing an introduction can be the hardest part and, although it is found at the beginning, it is often easier to complete this part last to make sure all key points are included.

### **Purpose**

In short, when writing your introduction, it should:

- Outline the direction of your assignment and argument
- Provide contextual and background information on the topic
- Explain the overall structure

### **Structure**

It's important to remember that there is no one way to structure your introduction, but most will include the following parts.

Part	Details
General Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually found at the beginning of the introduction.</li><li>• Will help you to introduce the general topic and give the reader contextual and background information.</li><li>• If you're writing a short essay, this may include 1 or 2 lines.</li><li>• For longer essays, you may choose to include definitions, outline the main topic and separate over 1 or more paragraphs.</li></ul>
Thesis Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually found at the end of the introduction.</li><li>• Will help you to give the reader clear information about the content of your essay.</li><li>• Will help you to outline your main ideas on the topic and your stance/ argument.</li><li>• It may also include an outline, as detailed below.</li></ul>
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will help you to explain to the reader how your assignment will be structured e.g. in chronological order.</li></ul>

### Example

[General statement] The introduction is an important component of any genre of academic writing. [Thesis statement] The Introduction will help the reader to understand the direction of the assignment, provide contextual and background information on the topic and explain the overall structure. [Outline] This essay will examine the purpose and structure of a well-written introduction and conclude that, unless the writer achieves this, the reader will find it extremely difficult to understand what the writing is about.

## 6. Main Body

The main body, or the main part to your essay, is a collection of paragraphs, all of which relate the to the topic.

### **Purpose**

To present, explore and develop your ideas and argument.

### **Structure**

The main body should be logically sequenced to ensure the reader can follow and understand your work. The main body of your essay must include well-constructed paragraphs. For more information on structuring your paragraphs, see the next section, 'Putting it all together'

## 7. Conclusion

In contrast to the introduction, the conclusion should be relatively straightforward. By this point in the writing process, your main ideas and argument should already be set out in the main body of your essay. Therefore, all you need to do is summarise your essay and add a concluding comment on the topic.

### **Purpose**

- To bring all of your main ideas together and set out your overall position
- Highlight gaps or weaknesses and make recommendations for future research

## Structure

Summarise your essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a clear transitional signal. For instance, “In conclusion...” to tell to the reader this is the end of your essay.</li><li>• Summarise your main ideas from the main body of your essay.</li><li>• Remind the reader of your thesis statement (your stance/argument).</li><li>• Refer back to your thesis statement in the introduction.</li><li>• Do not include any new research, ideas or arguments.</li></ul> <p>Tip: If you have written your thesis statement at this point, you may find it easier to produce a restatement of your thesis statement, albeit using different words.</p>
Concluding statement	<p>Your concluding comment may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlight any gaps or weakness in research.</li><li>• Propose a solution to any issues identified in the main body.</li><li>• Make recommendations for future research.</li></ul>

## Example

[Summarise] In conclusion, this essay has considered the importance of a well-written introduction, emphasising key components, such a general comment, thesis statement and outline will help the reader to understand the direction of the assignment. [Concluding statement] If writers begin to follow this process and incorporate the key components noted above, then some of the problems often faced in academic writing can be lessened.

## 8. Additional Matters

You should also include:

- Reference list
- Bibliography
- Appendices
- A word-count (at the end of the assessment, excluding references, figures and appendices)

### Reflective Essay

#### 1. Definition

Draws on personal experiences by critically analysing an experience, demonstrating how it affected you, linking back to theory.

#### 2. Purpose

During your time at the University of Bolton, it is most likely you will be required to write a reflective essay, in which you reflect on academic or work-based placements, evaluate an experiment or simply a reflection on literature that links theory to practice. However, it can often to prove difficult to write about your feelings and be critical of your actions.

This piece of work will allow you to reflect on an event and demonstrate to the audience what you have learnt from it. It is an opportunity for you to explain what happened, briefly express your feelings and what you have learnt and how you could do things differently next time.

Needless to say, therefore, this style of writing will not only help you in an academic context, but develop important skills that will support you in your chosen profession once you commence employment.

### 3. Writing Styles

Reflective essays include a number of styles, including:

#### **Critical**

Include academic reasoning on your experience and how it relates to theory or professional practice

#### **Descriptive**

Describe, succinctly your experience.

#### **Evaluative**

This may include an evaluation of your role.

#### **Analytical**

Choose and explain key events during your experience.

### 4. Choose a Topic

Before you begin to structure your assignment, you need to choose a topic.

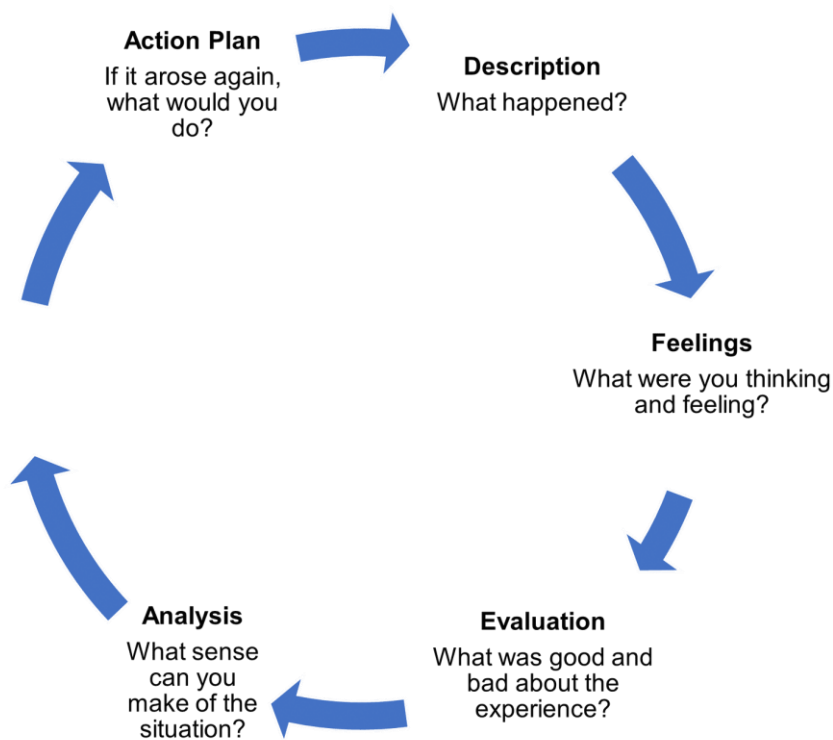
Remember, although you're writing about a personal experience, it is still a formal piece of academic writing that needs to meet the assignment brief. Therefore, you need to choose a topic that achieves this objective and allows you to write a strong piece of work. To help you choose a topic, you may wish to consider the following:

- Is the topic relevant? If not, perhaps it's one to avoid.
- Does the topic relate to theory? If so, you can write about how your experience links back to existing literature.
- Did you learn something? If so, write about what you learnt as long as it links back to the topic.
- Were you inspired? Did the topic inspire you, but you can still write about it critically?
- Can the topic be analysed? For instance, are there different debates around the topic you can write about?

## 5. Structure

Your assignment brief may ask you to consider a certain model of reflection. There are various models, all of which help you to reflect but may have different sections. For the purpose of this Tutorial, Gibbs (1988) has been used. Other models include Driscoll (1994) that considers 'What? So What? Now What?' whereby, if you use this model, you will need to structure your assignment slightly differently. As a general rule, always check your assignment brief to see whether you have been instructed to use a certain model of reflection.

Gibbs (1988) considers six stages of reflection, all of which will help you to structure your assignment. These are:





## 6. Preliminaries

### **Purpose**

Students at the University of Bolton are expected to include a title page that contains key information that helps the reader to identify the contents and author of their work.

### **Structure**

Generally, a title page should include the following information:

- Programme name
- Module title
- Assessment title
- Your student number
- Your marking tutor
- Date of submission

Always check with your Module Tutor to ensure all information has been included.

## 7. Description

You might want to comment on the following:

- Explain what happened
- Provide background and contextual information on the topic. That might include details on your work-based placement and who you were working with (careful to maintain confidentiality)
- Describe the event but hold short of describing your feelings – just stick to the facts

## 8. Feelings

- You might want to comment on the following:
- Discuss your feelings and thoughts on the event
- How did it make you feel at the time and afterwards?
- Remember this is your personal reflection, therefore, you can discuss your feelings – just remember it is a piece of academic writing
- Avoid offensive language
- Maintain confidentiality

## 9. Evaluation

You might want to comment on the following:

- Describe how well it went. For instance, how did you and those around you react?
- What was good and bad about the experience?
- Were there any limits, implications or lessons to be learnt? If so, how did these affect you?
- Link back to theory

## 10. Analysis

You might want to comment on the following:

- Follows your evaluation
- You might want to comment on why the event took place
- Did anything help or hinder the situation?
- Link back to theory

## 11. Conclusion

You might want to comment on the following:

- What you could have done differently
- If the experience was negative, is there anything you would do to avoid the situation from happening or prevent it from happening again?
- If the experience was positive, would you do the same next time? Are there any long-term effects?
- Link to theories, if necessary

## 12. Action Plan

You might want to comment on the following:

- The Action Plan will summarise any action you will need to take for next time
- State what you learnt. Did you take anything away from the experience?
- What is the broader significance? Are there any lessons to be learnt from your experience that affects the profession of your programme, for students or existing theories?
- Do you need to attend additional training to support your learning?
- Do you need to seek advice from your mentor?
- If the situation arises again, will you be in a better position to cope with it?

## 13. Be Critical

It is important to draw on your personal reflection critically, by:

- Not being too descriptive e.g., don't write a story about an event.
- Using your experience as a starting point, but don't forget to branch out into your reading and include theories
- State whether your experience is common or uncommon?
- You want to be critical but you should maintain confidentiality. For example, if you're a Trainee Teacher or student Nurse, ensure you delete names of

students, patients and/or Trusts, etc. you work at. If you're unsure, always check with your Module Tutor.

## 14. Useful Tips

- Be selective – you can't include everything
- Avoid irrelevance; use examples which link to wider reading, which are relevant to the assignment brief
- Limit your emotions. If needed, be critical about your experience, but avoid emotional outpourings
- Personal pronouns, such as 'I,' 'me' and 'my' can be used Avoid repetition
- Demonstrate self-awareness and an awareness for others

## 15. Additional Matters

You should also include:

- Reference list
- Bibliography
- Appendices
- A word-count (at the end of the assessment, excluding references, figures and appendices)

## Report Writing

### 1. Definition

According to EAP (2022) a report presents and analyses information with a clear structure.

### 2. Purpose

This genre of academic writing is usually saved for presenting the results of an experiment or investigation (EAP, 2022).

Reports are structured slightly differently to an essay, as it may contain sub-headings, graphs, charts and tables. Let's take a look at the structure of a report in greater details.

### 3. Structure

Generally, the structure of a report will be similar for all disciplines at the University of Bolton. For the purpose of this Tutorial, a typical structure, using the AIMRaD format (Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion) has been detailed below.

It is important that you refer to your Module Guide and Tutor to ensure you structure and format your report correctly.

### 4. Preliminaries

#### Title Page

##### **Purpose**

Students at the University of Bolton are expected to include a title page that contains key information that helps the reader to identify the contents and author of their work.

## **Structure**

Generally, a title page should include the following information:

- Programme name
- Module title
- Assessment title
- Your student number
- Your marking tutor
- Date of submission

Always check with your Module Tutor to ensure all information has been included.

## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

A summary of your report.

### **Structure**

The abstract will usually include a summary of the following information:

- Purpose
- Main ideas/ findings
- Methodology
- Conclusion

## **Contents page**

### **Purpose**

Will outline what's included in your report.

### **Structure**

The contents page will usually include the following information:

- A list of headings/ subheadings
- Page numbers

- Section numbers e.g. main sections are given single numbers 1,2,3, etc and decimal numbers will be attributed to sub-sections e.g. 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1 and so on. Don't forget to add section numbers as you write your report
- A list of tables, diagrams and appendices

## Terms of Reference

### **Purpose**

To help define key terms and classify information.

### **Structure**

A list of key terms with their respective definition to help classify information.

## 5. Abstract

Also known as a summary, summarises the essential points of the report.

### **Purpose**

As noted above the Abstract should summarise the main points of the report, such as the purpose of the methodology, the main findings and conclusion.

### **Structure**

Should not be written in note or list form and usually represents 10% of the word count.

## 6. Introduction

The introduction will often contain different sub-sections, including:

### **Background**

#### **Purpose**

As the name suggests, it provides the reader with background information on the topic area.

## **Structure**

Generally, the background will take up the form of a literature review. Therefore, you will need to find relevant source material, which you will need to cite, reference and paraphrase appropriately.

## **Aim**

## **Purpose**

To explain to the reader why you have written this report.

## **Structure**

- Well-constructed paragraphs.
- The language you use to structure this section will depend on whether you are reporting on historic research or existing. See the paraphrasing Tutorial for more information on tense language.

## **7. Methodology**

### **Purpose**

Also referred to as the 'Procedure,' this section of your report will outline your approach to the research carried out, considering how you obtained information, where from and quantity.

### **Structure**

Points to include:

- How the research was carried out e.g. surveys (interview or questionnaire)
- The target group
- Number of people included in the research
- Whether quantitative or qualitative methods of research were used
- Whether any equipment was used
- Any precautions



## 8. Results

### **Purpose**

Also referred to as the 'Findings,' this section gives the reader information on the data that was collected.

## 9. Discussion

### **Purpose**

Also referred to as the 'Analysis,' and very similar to the main body of an essay, this section will develop your ideas. It should fulfil the aims of report, draw upon background information and literature outlined in the introduction and include information to support your recommendation and conclusion.

### **Structure**

- Use of sub-sections, with sub-headings
- Use of Well-constructed paragraphs
- Themes
- Topic sentences
- Tables and graphs

## 10. Conclusion

### **Purpose**

To present your conclusion based on the information contained within the 'Discussion.'

### **Structure**

- Clear and concise
- Use of well-constructed paragraphs
- Relate back to the aim of the report
- Tell the reader whether the aim has been achieved

- Do not include any new information

## 11. Recommendations

### **Purpose**

To suggest actions that can be taken in response to the analysis of your report.

### **Structure**

- Use of well-constructed paragraphs
- Be specific
- Based on the findings outlined in the 'Discussion'
- Do not include any new information

## 12. Additional Matters

You should also include:

- Reference list
- Bibliography
- Appendices
- A word-count (at the end of the assessment, excluding references, figures and appendices)

## Descriptive Writing

### 1. Definition

You may find that most of your assignments at the University of Bolton will include an element of descriptive writing. You may need to write a description about an experience, a situation you may have handled during your time on placement, emotions you have felt, a place, individual or even an object. While this style of writing will allow you more freedom to write, it is important that you do not give too much detail and neglect the purpose.

## 2. Purpose

At the University, you may need to write a description for:

- The methods used during an experiment
- The findings for your research
- Case studies
- Providing contextual background information
- Outline of events
- An experience you wish to outline in a reflective essay
- A classroom observation

## 3. Structure

Descriptive writing may be used in different genres, including essays and reports. See these areas for information on structure.

## 4. Tips

Make sure your descriptions are:

- Summarised – avoid writing too much description
- Unambiguous (clear)
- Easy to follow
- Be specific – don't overgeneralise
- Include in-text citations and references where appropriate
- Are your own words

## Comparative Analysis/evaluation

### 1. Definition

Usually takes up the form of an essay, through which you will need to compare and contrast two things.

### 2. Purpose

During your time at the University, you maybe asked to write an essay in which you compare and contrast two:

- Theories/ Theorists
- Schools of thought
- Scientific processes
- Models or ideas
- Authors and their debate on an issue

### 3. Structure

A Comparative Analysis/Evaluation may be used in different genres, including essays and reports. See these areas for more information.

### 4. Features of Comparative Analysis/Evaluation

#### **Comparison**

To find points of similarity. You should demonstrate to the audience you are aware of differences, despite similarities.

#### **Contrast**

To highlight differences.

## **Analysis**

- Contextualise and analyse the similarities and/or differences
- Consider their importance
- Are there any implications?

## **Evaluate**

Make a judgement and state which theory is desirable. State the reasons for your evaluation, based on an analysis of evidence.

## **Criteria**

Ensure your work refers to the criteria used that help you arrive at your decision. For instance, the quality of data or research.

## **Synthesis**

To Synthesise in academic writing is about bringing diverse ideas together to arrive at a new meaning or idea. In this context, consider the strengths of the different approaches to establish whether there is a different way to look at the issue.

## **5. Tips**

Find the right balance. Ensure you find the right balance when you compare and contrast ideas.

Ensure you compare and contrast equivalent concepts. For instance, you wouldn't compare an orange with an apple.

## Synthesising

### 1. Definition

Synthesising is a useful academic skill that will help you with analytical writing. To Synthesise, it will involve combining ideas from multiple sources in your work. Unlike paraphrasing, which focuses on one author (or idea/ academic source), synthesising will draw on a range of academic sources to find ideas that are similar or contradictory to establish a new idea to support your argument.

### 2. Purpose

Synthesising will help you to explain ideas from multiple sources or draw together particular themes or traits. It will also help you to develop and strength your argument(s), demonstrate you have read widely on the topic and cite and reference multiple sources.

### 3. How to Synthesise

#### **Step 1: Read**

You should find and read relevant source material.

#### **Step 2: Note-taking**

Make notes on all sources you use in your own words.

#### **Step 3: Cite and reference**

You must cite and reference all source material used in your writing.

#### **Step 4: Create a grid**

Using a new Microsoft Word document insert a table (on Word select 'insert,' 'table' and choose how many grids you would like. If you prefer, you can draw a grid on a piece of paper using the same method.

### Step 5: List your ideas

Within each grid, make a list of the main ideas from each source.

### Step 6: Identify themes and arguments

Once you have done this, try to identify the common themes and arguments from each source. If it helps, use different colours to help you do this. Let's take a look at an example.

#### *Learning outcome*

*'Discuss why in-person learning is important and evaluate its effectiveness as a mode of teaching compared to online learning.'*

The below illustration shows where a student has created a grid and made notes on four sources. The student has identified two common themes, being:

1. Meaningful interactions and activities
2. Location

The student has highlighted these themes using green (for 'Location') and blue for 'Meaningful interactions and activities').

<b>Source 1: Theorist A (2022)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In-person teaching means all students can <b>learn together</b>.</li><li>• In-person teaching offers teachers the ability to engage in <b>meaningful activities</b>.</li></ul>	<b>Source 2: Theorist B (2018)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In-person teaching allows for synchronous learning (A group is engaged in learning at the <b>same location</b>).</li><li>• Teaching is <b>more meaningful</b> in-person as it allows the teacher to interact with students effectively with non-verbal communication, which is difficult online.</li></ul>
<b>Source 3: (Theorist C, 2017)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students appear more comfortable in a classroom environment.</li><li>• In-person teaching allows <b>for meaningful social</b> interactions between students, their teacher and peers.</li></ul>	<b>Source 4: (Theorist D, 2022, p.5)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing the student has an electronic device and internet, they will be able to access the lesson from anywhere in the world, at any time. <b>Meaning students don't need to be in the same location</b>.</li><li>• Online teaching is <b>more meaningful than</b> in-person as it allows students to</li></ul>

	<p>develop their digital skills, can learn in familiar surroundings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• and saves time and money travelling to their provision.</li></ul>
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### Step 7: Review your notes and write your argument.

The notes in the above illustration helped the writer to identify similar and contradictory arguments. You will note how 'Theorist D' has a different idea around 'Meaningful Interactions and activities,' compared to the other Theorists. These ideas can now be combined into a paragraph to support your argument. Remember to cite and reference your work.

The following paragraph argues the point in-person teaching is important and it remains an effective mode of teaching compared to teaching online.

"(1) Teaching in-person remains an effective mode of delivery, compared to teaching online. Supporting the argument that in-person teaching is important, (2) Theorist B (2018) and Theorist A (2022) highlight that in a physical environment, students are able to learn together in the same location. The physical environment is a significant factor when teaching in-person as it allows for meaningful interactions between the teacher and their peers (3) (Theorist C, 2017; Theorist B, 2018; Theorist A, 2022). However, (4) Theorist D (2022, p.5) argues that, despite the benefits of in-person teaching, learning online provides students with a richer experience as it allows students to develop their digital skills, learn in familiar surroundings, which in turn, will (4) 'save time and money travelling to their provision.' (5) The weight of evidence appears to suggest that a blended approach to teaching will ensure the needs of all students are met. The next section of this assignment will focus on..."

1. Topic sentence. You may wish to outline the intention of the paragraph or argument.
2. Remember to cite your sources.



3. Synthesised information from three different sources. The sentence is a summary of their idea. You should cite them all in the same bracket, in order of publication date (earliest first), separated with a semi colon.
4. Information from a single source (Theorist D) using a short quote.
5. Concluding sentence. Links back to the overall argument and transitions to the next paragraph/section of the assignment.

#### 4. Your Voice

Based on the evidence you have synthesised; it is important that your own voice comes across in your academic writing. This can be achieved using a number of methods. For more information on finding your own voice, please read through the following tutorials within this LEAP Online section:

- An Introduction to Academic Writing (this current tutorial)
- [Paraphrasing](#)
- [Other Writing Skills](#)

### Formatting

Your Module Guide will outline how to format your work. However, general University of Bolton conventions, include:

- Font and Size: You should use Arial or Calibri Light, font size 12 for written assessments.
- Line spacing: double-spacing
- All pages should be numbered
- How to attach appendices

There may be other genres and writing styles not detailed above. Always refer to the Module Guide or speak to your Module Tutor should you have queries on format and structure.

By this point, you should have a clear idea of the topic, who the audience is and how to format and structure your work. Now, you need to think about how you're going to put it together.

## Putting it All together



### Cohesion: A logical progression of your ideas)

A logical progression of your ideas will ensure that the audience can follow and understand your writing. Using your assignment plan think about:

- The order in which the audience needs to know about that piece of information
- Select the main point and make sure it answers the learning outcome and is relevant to the argument you wish to make. If it doesn't, revisit your plan and amend accordingly
- Once you've sequenced your ideas, discuss the order with a peer to get their thoughts and to make sure they can follow your work.



See the [Academic Cohesion](#) tutorial of this LEAP Online section for more information.

## Paragraphs

A paragraph, which is made up of a set of sentences, will help you to develop your idea and support your overall argument.

Paragraphs are an effective way to break up the text into manageable blocks for the audience, allowing them to see how your writing develops step-by-step. Some useful techniques you can consider when preparing a paragraph include:

### 1. Paragraph Introduction

You can start each paragraph with a topic sentence. For example, you may wish to outline the intention of the paragraph and argument. This will help to signal the purpose of the paragraph and provide the audience with an easy transition from the previous paragraph.

### 2. Paragraph Main Body

The main body of your paragraph should be used to explain the topic (which was introduced at the beginning). Evidence should be used to support your argument and to give your interpretation of research.

### 3. Paragraph Conclusion

Conclude your paragraph by linking your idea to the overall argument you're trying to make and transition to the next paragraph.

Your paragraph can be developed using the following techniques:

## 1. TEEL

The TEEL strategy is a good way to ensure your writing is well organised and easy to follow. TEEL stands for:

### **Topic Sentence**

As demonstrated above under 'Paragraph Introduction' a Topic Sentence will allow you to outline the main idea of the paragraph.

### **Explain**

This is an opportunity for you to explain why your main point is important and supports your overall argument.

### **Evidence**

Provide evidence to support your main point. Ensure you cite and reference appropriately.

### **Link**

Usually optional, but as demonstrated under 'Paragraph Conclusion' above, it will help to link your idea to the overall argument. Furthermore, it is also an effective way of transitioning to the next paragraph.

## 2. Chronological Organisation

Helps to describe a series of events, steps or observations that occur in time. For example, if you were asked to write an essay about the history of education in the UK since the beginning of the twentieth century, you would begin with its conception (say, 1900★) and outline significant events up to present day.

## 3. Spatial Organisation

Helps the audience to visualise an idea as you want them to see it, evoke the audience's senses and is often used in descriptive essays. For example, if you were asked to write an essay describing objects you would find on a hospital ward, you

may choose to describe the items as they appear when observed. This approach will help you to create a vivid picture for the reader.

When should I start a new paragraph?

### 1. New Idea or Point

You should start a new paragraph when you begin a new idea or point. If your idea extends over several paragraphs, each new point within that idea should have its own paragraph.

### 2. To Demonstrate Contrast

You can also start a new paragraph if you want to demonstrate a contrast between information or ideas. Separate paragraphs will help to contrast the different sides of a debate, different points of an argument, or any other difference.

### 3. The Audience Needs a Pause

Paragraphs also act as a short break for the audience. Adding a “pause” will help the audience to follow your argument. It’s a good idea to add a “pause” if your paragraph is becoming too lengthy or complex.

## Transition Signals

Help to signal the relationship between ideas and help the audience to follow your argument effectively.



See the [Academic Cohesion](#) tutorial of this LEAP Online section for more information.

**In the next section we will explore the value of evidence in your academic writing.**

## Evidence



Evidence is an important feature of academic writing that helps to support your opinion and argument. Evidence may include:

- Data and statistics
- Examples
- Facts
- Citations

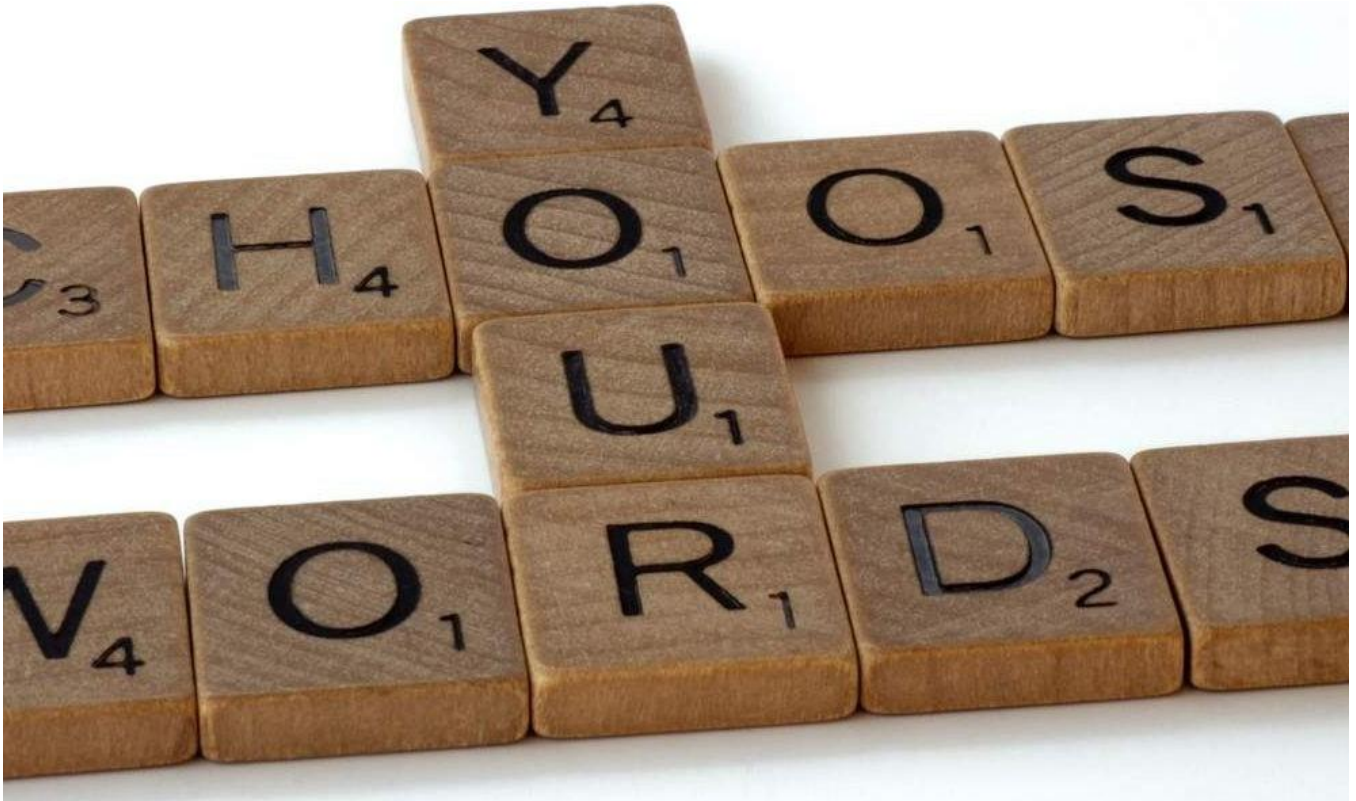
Using evidence will add substance to your work, allows the audience to see you have undertaken thorough research and helps to support your understanding of different concepts and theories. Unless evidence is used in your writing, it may be considered unreliable or bias.

Remember, you must cite and reference sources appropriately. Failure to do this may result in issues with plagiarism and academic misconduct.



To learn how cite and reference according to your school's referencing policy see the '[Referencing](#)' section on LEAP Online for more information.

## Language



### Be Concise

- Try and limit it to one point, per sentence.
- Try to use succinct sentences where possible to avoid your point becoming lost in long, complex sentences. For example, "a man by the the name of Alexander Graham Bell invited..." would become "Bell invited..."

### Use Formal Language

For formal academic writing assignments, you should avoid:

#### 1. Colloquialisms

An informal word or expression that is often used in everyday speech. For example, "Donald (2022) ought [ought being the colloquialism] to be more specific regarding..." can be replaced with "There is an opportunity for Donald (2022) to be more specific regarding..."



## 2. Contractions

The result of combining two words together, using an apostrophe. For example, the phrase, 'This isn't the case' should be presented as 'this is not the case.'

## 3. Clichés

Have a general meaning or overused and no longer has a meaning. For example, the phrase, 'read between the lines,' can be replaced with, 'implicitly.'

### Abbreviation

Use abbreviations where the phrase is likely to appear frequently in your paper. For example, the Department for Education could be abbreviated to ✓DfE★. When you first use a phrase that you wish to abbreviate, make sure you use the full phrase and show the abbreviation in the parentheses immediately after. For example, Department for Education ("DfE") or (hereafter referred to as "DfE")

### Misplaced Conjunctions

In your writing, you should not start a sentence with the following words: 'or', 'and', 'but' and 'yet'.

### Never use 'You'

Although the word 'you' may appear in text books, websites and advertisements, it shouldn't be used in your academic writing.

For example:

'You can increase motivation using rewards'

Instead, use a passive structure:

'Motivation can be increased using rewards'

Or:

'It is possible to increase motivation using rewards'

Alternatively, be explicit and say who 'you' refers to:

'Managers can increase motivation using rewards'



For more information on using a passive structure in your writing, see 'Find Your Voice' in the [Paraphrasing](#) tutorial of this LEAP Online section.

Next let's explore the importance of finding your own voice when embarking on a piece of academic writing.

## Voice



While academic theories should be incorporated into your writing; the most important voice is your own. Academic writing provides you with an opportunity to discuss your thoughts, opinion and understanding on the topic.

### Language Functions

The use of different language functions will help your voice emerge from the writing, especially through discussion points, interpretation of research and evaluation of academic resources. The following functions will help with this:

Language Functions	For Example
Give context	"Contemporary / historical research has focused on 'X'"
Support your opinion with evidence	"It appears 'X' is an effective method... Donald (2022) argues/ proposes/ claims/ suggests/concludes..."
Refer to resources that agree with your opinion	"It is evident that Donald's (2022) findings present a clear indication that..."  "Donald (2022) successfully identifies..."

Refer to resources where weaknesses can be found	<p>“William’s analysis does not account for ‘X’”</p> <p>“William fails to consider ‘X’”</p>
Remain cautious	<p>“A likely / probable explanation for ‘X’ is...”</p>
Introducing a new topic (Topic sentence)	<p>“As indicated in the introduction of this paper / previous paragraph/ chapter... This paragraph will now focus on ‘X’”</p> <p>“As far as ‘X’ is concerned...”</p>
Summarise your paragraph/section	<p>“So far, this assignment has argued...”</p> <p>“To conclude this paragraph / section, it is clear that existing literature demonstrates... ”</p>
Transition to the next point	<p>“So far, this assignment has argued... The following section will discuss/argue/examine/analyse/etc...”</p> <p>“Having considered ‘X’, the next section of this paper will discuss/argue/examine/analyse/etc...”</p>
Synthesising helps to bring sources together	<p>“In the same vein, Donald (2020) also concludes...”</p> <p>"Similarly, Donald (2020) found that..."</p> <p>"In contrast to Donald (2020), Michael (2021) argues that..."</p>

## Be Critical

Interpretation of the learning outcomes for your assignment can be quite diverse. Remember, if you have a different opinion to a peer, that's okay!

As an academic writer, you should avoid being too descriptive in your writing. Instead, analyse and evaluate your research and make a judgement about it.

Research, theories and arguments are free to be challenged. So, don't be afraid to be critical! Give your opinion but make sure it's supported with evidence.

### Useful tip



Your argument should be detailed throughout your writing. Keep referring to your plan because this will help you to keep focused as you write your assignment. See the '[Critical Thinking](#)' section on LEAP Online for more information.

## Be Precise

Use clear and precise language. You may need to use specialist words in your writing but define this vocabulary if it is not commonly used, or you need to demonstrate understanding to the audience. Here are some useful tips:

- Try to pre-empt some of the questions the reader may ask when they read your work. Below is a table of general language, with some questions and synonyms, which will help you become more precise with your writing
- Always link the argument back to the learning outcomes

General	Specific
Big	Can you give a number, size or percentage? Do you mean 'significant' or 'important'?
Small	Can you give a number, size or percentage? Do you mean 'insignificant' or 'unimportant'?
Good	Effective, efficient, productive, successful, healthy, profitable
Bad	Inefficient, unproductive, unsuccessful, unhealthy, unprofitable
A lot	Can you give a number? If you have to say 'many/much' or 'the majority'
Make	Generate, create, establish, provide, promote
Get	Collect, gather, find, obtain, become

### Avoid Bias

You should remain balanced. Present both sides of the argument and demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of these claims. This can be achieved by using techniques, such as hedges, boosters and reporting verbs.



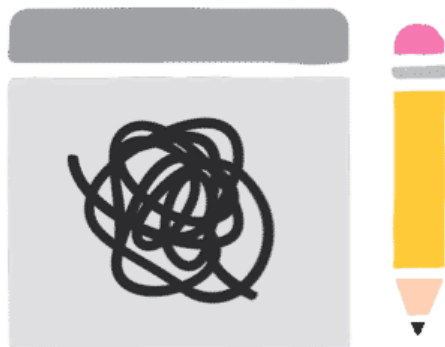
See '[Paraphrasing](#)' and '[Other Writing Skills](#)' tutorials of this LEAP Online section for more information.

## Objective

The active voice is used to describe the action, using possessive adjectives and subject pronouns, such as: 'my,' 'our,' 'I' and 'we.'

However, in your academic writing, emphasis should be placed on your writing, rather than you. Therefore, using a passive voice will help you to avoid writing as the first-person.

Unless you are instructed otherwise, an impersonal approach, also commonly referred to as the third-person view, should be used in your writing.



### Pause and Reflect

Let's look at an example:

The sentence below has been written in an active voice, consider how this could be rewritten in a passive voice.

*"In this essay, I aim to examine theories on academic writing."*

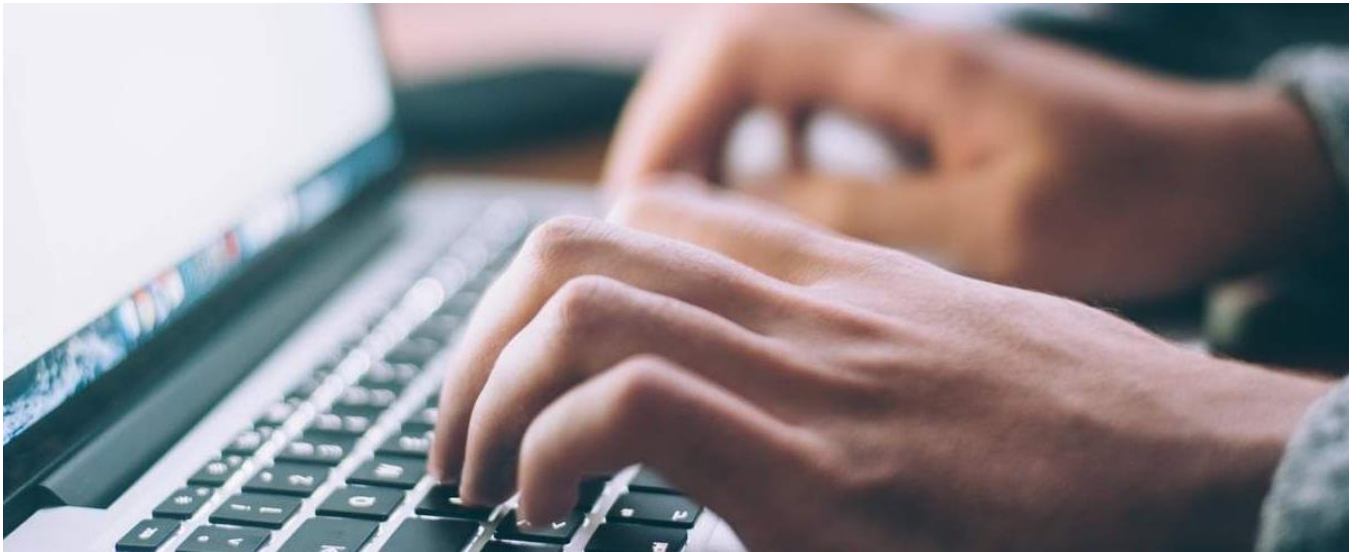
When you're ready, see our solution below.

### Our solution

"Academic writing theories will be examined in this essay."

When you compare the passive example to the active example, you will notice how: The sentence structure has changed, the word 'I' has been removed and the word 'examine' has been changed to 'examined'. Don't worry too much about this for now as the Paraphrasing tutorial will provide more information on sentence structure and how to change the active and passive voice.

## Summary



This section has considered the definition of academic writing and the 6 key features of writing success, being:

- Clear Focus and Planning
- Audience
- Genres and Writing Styles
- Evidence
- Language
- Voice

### Where to go to next

Before you leave, select the button below to complete a short assessment and earn your LEAP Online digital badge.

Once you have completed the assessment, close the tab, return to the 'Academic Writing - Level 2' LEAP Online section and begin the next tutorial.



## Digital Bage

Before you leave, select the button below to complete a short assessment and earn your LEAP Online digital badge.

Academic Writing: An Introduction to Academic Writing?

[Moodle assessment](#)



For more support on this topic, consider attending a free workshop at [LEAP Live](#).

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