

Activity Type

Reading, matching and writing exercises

Focus

Academic style - correct formal register in essay writing

Aim

To learn and practice some common rules of academic style for essay writing.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1-B2)

Time

45 minutes

Introduction

In this academic style worksheet, students learn and practice some common rules of academic style for essay writing.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

Students begin by matching sentence halves together to reveal six common rules of academic style in essay writing.

Exercise A - Answer key

1. d 2. e 3. a 4. c 5. f 6. b

Next, students review a table that shows a number of academic style errors commonly made by students and how they can be fixed.

The students then analyse an example sentence to identify and categorise the academic style errors.

Exercise B - Answer key

Cliché: At the end of the day

Personal pronoun: we

Judgemental or emotive language: believe, amazing

Absolute statements: definitely

After that, students look at a table containing a number of informal words and phrases. The students then replace them with appropriate formal words.

Exercise C - Possible answers

Informal	Formal
quit	resign / leave / abandon / suspend
get	obtain / secure / acquire
good	suitable / beneficial / useful
bad	poor / unhealthy / critical / serious
help	assist / aid / relief / support
let	allow / permit / authorise
enough	sufficient / ample / adequate
look for	seek / pursue
find out	discover / learn / unearth / reveal
talk about	discuss / examine / debate

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Procedure continued

In the last exercise, students read an essay to identify and underline academic style errors. When the students have finished, they compare the issues they underlined with a partner. Finally, review the revised version of the essay that adheres to academic style rules with the students that can be found on the next page.

Exercise D - Answer key

The world is currently facing a terrible and growing problem with wealth inequality. Over the past 40 years, the gap between the earnings of the bottom twenty per cent of the American population and the top one per cent jumped up by more than 10 times. This has in, recent years, contributed to social and political instability, and one frequently talked about fix is to bring in a basic universal income. In my opinion, there are two convincing arguments for launching basic universal income programs.

Universal basic income will certainly mitigate the disruption that's predicted to result from increased automation in the economy. How will this be so? By some estimates, the number of job losses caused by artificial intelligence could be in the hundreds of millions globally. Although we also expect that artificial intelligence will create demand for new jobs, many workers don't have the required skills that'll be needed. Universal basic income will not only support people financially in the aftermath of mass firings, but it'll also allow them to invest time in retraining to get the skills that will be valued in the new economy.

In addition to softening the move toward more automation, universal basic income can be good for the economy. A significant increase in unemployment has a bad effect on the demand for goods and services, which would put many current businesses at risk and lead to further job losses. Universal basic income could help keep enough demand in the economy to protect businesses and jobs. Moreover, with no income, people are often forced to borrow money to make ends meet, which results in an increase in private debt. As we all know, rising private debt has been an important factor in many financial crises of the past century.

At the end of the day, introducing universal basic income will be great. It may help us minimise or avoid some of the consequences of future technological disruption and protect the economy. Universal basic income may also change the way countries deal with social welfare.

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Procedure continued

Model Essay

The world is currently facing a serious and growing problem with wealth inequality. Over the past forty years, the gap between the earnings of the bottom twenty per cent of the American population and the top one per cent increased more than tenfold. This has, in recent years, contributed to social and political instability, and one frequently discussed remedy is the introduction of a basic universal income. There are two convincing arguments for launching basic universal income programs.

Universal basic income has the potential to mitigate the disruption that is predicted to result from increased automation in the economy. By some estimates, the number of job losses caused by artificial intelligence could be in the hundreds of millions globally. Although it is also expected that artificial intelligence will create demand for new jobs, many workers do not have the required skills that may be needed. Universal basic income may not only support people financially in the aftermath of mass redundancies, but it could also allow them to invest time in retraining to acquire the skills that should be valued in the new economy.

In addition to softening the transition toward more automation, universal basic income can be beneficial for the economy. A significant increase in unemployment has a negative impact on the demand for goods and services, which would put many current businesses at risk and lead to further job losses. Universal basic income could help sustain sufficient demand in the economy to protect businesses and jobs. Moreover, with no income, people are often forced to borrow money to pay for essentials, which results in an increase in private debt. Evidence suggests that rising private debt has been an important factor in many financial crises of the past century.

To conclude, introducing universal basic income has some merit. It may help minimise or avoid some of the consequences of future technological disruption and protect the economy. Universal basic income could also change the way countries deal with social welfare.

The language used in essay writing has a particular style, which is academic and differs in many ways from spoken language. This worksheet will help you become more familiar with the correct style or register required in academic contexts, which is more formal and objective.

A. Match the sentence halves together to reveal six common rules of academic style.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. For numbers one to ten, write the actual words | a. such as 'go up' or 'talk about'. |
| 2. Use complex sentences | b. and use formal academic words. |
| 3. Avoid phrasal verbs | c. such as don't, can't, or won't. |
| 4. Do not use contracted word forms | d. rather than the figures e.g. five and not 5. |
| 5. Use precise language and avoid vagueness by | e. and avoid the overuse of simple sentences. |
| 6. Avoid informal and idiomatic language | f. using numbers and statistics where possible. |

The table below shows a number of academic style errors commonly made by students and how they can be fixed.

	Informal (Incorrect)	Formal (Correct)
Contractions	The storm wasn't severe.	The storm was not severe.
Phrasal verbs	The company wants to pull out of the deal.	The company intends to exit the deal.
Slang	Kids should exercise more.	Children should exercise more.
Texting acronyms	The problem needs to be solved ASAP.	The problem requires urgent attention.
Cliché	It goes without saying that protecting the environment is important.	Obviously, protecting the environment is important.
Personal pronouns	You have many course options at State University.	Students have many course options at State University.
Rhetorical questions	Why are vaccines a controversial issue?	Vaccines are a controversial issue.
Judgemental or emotive language	I believe that... A fantastic development...	Evidence shows... A very positive development...
Absolute statements	Germans are punctual.	Germans tend to be punctual.

B. The sentence below has four types of academic style errors. List those error types shown in the table above in the space provided.

At the end of the day, we believe this technology definitely represents an amazing opportunity.

Error types:

.....

C. The table below contains a number of informal words and phrases. Replace them with appropriate formal words.

Informal	Formal
quit	
get	
good	
bad	
help	
let	
enough	
look for	
find out	
talk about	

D. The essay below has a number of problems with academic style. Identify and underline the errors. Then, compare the issues you underlined with a partner.

The world is currently facing a terrible and growing problem with wealth inequality. Over the past 40 years, the gap between the earnings for the bottom twenty per cent of the American population and the top one per cent jumped up by more than 10 times. This has in, recent years, contributed to social and political instability, and one frequently talked about fix is to bring in a basic universal income. In my opinion, there are two convincing arguments for launching basic universal income programs.

Universal basic income will certainly mitigate the disruption that's predicted to result from increased automation in the economy. How will this be so? By some estimates, the number of job losses caused by artificial intelligence could be in the hundreds of millions globally. Although we also expect that artificial intelligence will create demand for new jobs, many workers don't have the required skills that'll be needed. Universal basic income will not only support people financially in the wake of mass firings, but it'll also allow them to invest time in retraining to get the skills that will be valued in the new economy.

In addition to softening the move toward more automation, universal basic income can be good for the economy. A significant increase in unemployment has a bad effect on the demand for goods and services, which would put many current businesses at risk and lead to further job losses. Universal basic income could help keep enough demand in the economy to protect businesses and jobs. Moreover, with no income, people are often forced to borrow money to make ends meet, which results in an increase in private debt. As we all know, rising private debt has been an important factor in many financial crises of the past century.

At the end of the day, introducing universal basic income will be great. It may help us minimise or avoid some of the consequences of future technological disruption and protect the economy. Universal basic income may also change the way countries deal with social welfare.

* Note: Learning vocabulary from the Academic Word List (AWL) is an effective way to improve your writing and avoid many academic style errors.