Three characteristics of academic writing

1. **Not just description**
   - Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between what it means to write a description, an analysis, or a critique. Critical analytical writing incorporates aspects of all three but the focus is on analysing the evidence and using this to take a position, thereby developing an argument.
   - **Description**: provides background or summarises the topic
   - **Analysis**: identifies aspects and characteristics of the topic through deep engagement with evidence to develop an argument
   - **Critical Analysis**: articulates an argument by explaining the relationships between the aspects and characteristics of the topic

2. **Evidence**
   - Your argument (position/recommendation etc) must be supported by evidence. What counts as evidence can vary from one discipline or profession to another, the diagram gives some examples. The boundaries between different types of evidence are not always clear and there is some overlap.
   - **Literature**: books, journal articles, reports
   - **Data**: data sets, case studies, interviews, questionnaires
   - **Artefacts**: abstract constructs (eg brands, movements), physical objects/ places/ spaces, online places/ spaces, texts (books, film)

3. **Language**
   - Move from more general (eg introducing) to more specific (eg expanding/elaborating) and back to more general (eg summarising) within the structure of the text. For example:
     - Paragraphs: topic - supporting - concluding sentences
     - Essays: introduction - body - conclusion
   - **Paraphrase and cite evidence**: states, indicates, argues, as shown by, according to, as suggested in
   - **Express relationships**: similarly, alternatively, therefore, consequently, however, in contrast, in comparison, for example, as a result
   - **Evaluate**: considerably, effectively, significant, difficult, successful
   - **Moderate**: may, probably, often, frequently, most, some, in most cases, in this example, in this situation
   - **Signpost**: firstly, secondly, finally, in summary, in conclusion
   - Be precise and consistent with the words you use, especially for discipline-specific terminology.

*Writing at University* • Develop your critical thinking and problem solving skills • Understand, analyse, interpret and evaluate disciplinary, professional and technical knowledge • Develop, explain and justify your own ideas, position

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