



UTS HELPS

How to write in academic style

Workshop Objectives

1. To understand the characteristics of academic writing
2. To analyse examples of academic writing

Characteristics of academic writing

1. Formal style
2. Objective style
3. Precise language
4. Evidence-based arguments
5. Demonstrates critical thinking

1. Formal Style



Avoid colloquial language and slang

Which words or phrases are too informal for academic writing?

- 1. There are heaps of problems with the proposed design solution.*
- 2. Lots of studies have been done about the effects of sugar on children.*
- 3. The government reckons that giving everyone a bunch of cash will make the economy better after coronavirus.*

Avoid colloquial language and slang

1. There are ***heaps of*** problems with the proposed design solution.
2. ***Lots of*** studies have been ***done*** about the effects of sugar on children.
3. The government ***reckons*** that giving everyone ***a bunch of cash*** will ***make*** the economy ***better*** after coronavirus.

Formal language

1. There are **a significant number of** problems with the proposed design solution.
2. **Many** studies have been **conducted** about the effects of sugar on children.
3. The government **believes** that **widespread cash payments** will **improve** the economy after coronavirus.

More examples

Informal Language

pretty good

very bad research

lots of

get better / worse / bigger

things

Formal Language

of reasonable quality

lacking evidence

a significant number of

improve / deteriorate / increase

factors / issues / characteristics

Formal language

Two good places to improve your academic vocabulary are:

- **The Academic Word List:**

<https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/academic-word-list-tool>

- **The Academic Phrasebank:**

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Avoid abbreviations

For example:

and instead of &

for example instead of e.g.

avoid using etc.

Avoid contractions

For example:

cannot instead of can't

it is instead of it's

have not instead of haven't

Use acronyms **correctly**

- **Write the name in full first time** with the acronym in brackets
e.g. *University of Technology, Sydney (UTS)*
- For the rest of the essay, use the acronym
e.g. *UTS*
- **Do not** use full stops between the abbreviated letters
e.g. *UTS* instead of *U.T.S.*

Other things to **avoid**:

- Dashes to add information
- Bullet point lists (unless you are permitted to do)
- Exclamation marks (!!!)
- *Italics* and underlining

2. Objective Style



Avoid using **personal** language

Personal

We believe that....

In my opinion....

Impersonal

Research has shown that....

According to Smith (2018)....

However, personal language is common and often required in reflective tasks.

For example:

During my nursing placement, I observed several instances of nurses displaying ethical behaviour.

Use **passive voice** to describe processes.

ACTIVE:

I increased the temperature of the mixture in the test-tubes.

PASSIVE:

The temperature of the mixture in the test-tubes was increased.

ACTIVITY

Which of the following sentences should be changed to passive voice?

- 1. We conducted a survey to learn more about students' perceptions of online learning.*
- 2. Globalisation leads to many benefits but also causes significant problems.*
- 3. The nurse gave the patient an injection and then the doctor prescribed antibiotics for the patient.*

ACTIVITY

- 1. A survey was conducted to learn more about students' perceptions of online learning.*
- 2. Globalisation leads to many benefits but also causes significant problems.*
- 3. The patient was given an injection and was prescribed antibiotics.*

Avoid emotional language

Example of emotional language:

*It was **extremely disappointing** that first year students were not taught how to avoid plagiarism. Some **caring lecturers** approached the issue by delivering a series of **brilliant workshops** to assist the students to overcome their referencing problems. It was a **fantastic strategy** that reduced the amount of plagiarism.*

Use neutral language

Example of neutral language:

There were concerns that students were not being taught how to avoid plagiarism. Some lecturers approached the issue by delivering a series of workshops to assist the students to overcome their referencing problems. The strategy appears to have been successful as the number of cases of plagiarism was reduced by 46% (Smith, 2019).

3. Precise Language



Use language **cautiously**

Rather than write:	Try writing:
<i>These results prove that.....</i>	<i>These results indicate that.....</i>
<i>This view is correct because</i>	<i>The evidence appears to support this view because.....</i>
<i>It is obvious that globalisation is a good thing.</i>	<i>Supporters of globalisation claim that it is beneficial because....*</i>

Avoid generalisations

This especially applies to individuals or groups on the basis of:

- gender
- nationality
- religion
- age
- sexuality
- political beliefs

For example:

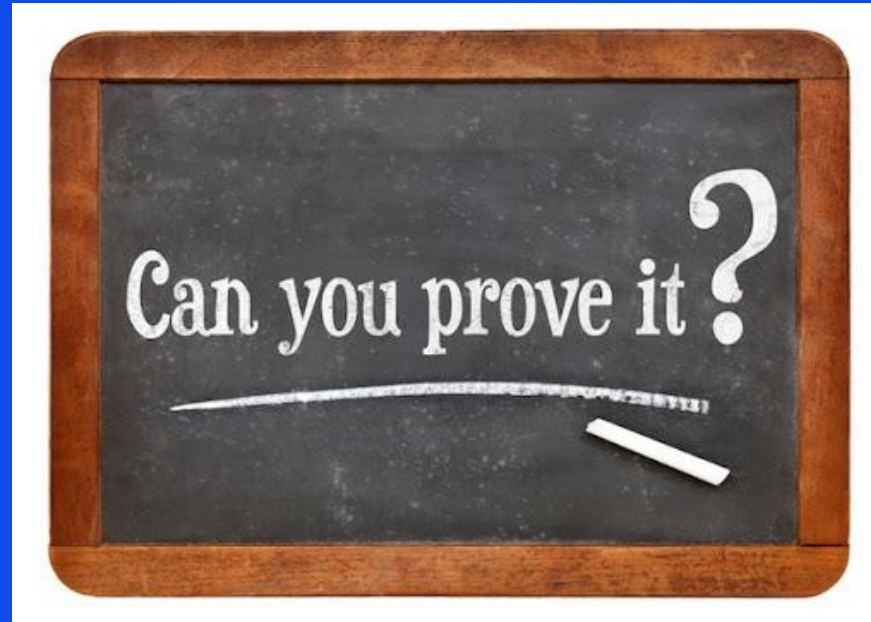
Women make better nurses because they are more nurturing and caring than men. 

Make it clear **what you are referring to.**

Rather than referring to **'things'**, we can instead use:

- factors
- characteristics
- attributes
- causes / effects
- problems / solutions
- issues / challenges

4. Evidence-based



Use evidence to support your claims

The Millennial generation are much more comfortable with technology than people from previous generations.



Smith (2019) claims that although so-called 'digital natives' are generally more confident using new technologies, they often lack critical awareness of how to use these technologies safely and effectively.



Claims must be **linked** to your argument.

What is wrong with the following sentences?

The asthma medication 'Amoxypan' has many side effects. In 2016, a man fell out a window while sleepwalking and sustained several injuries.

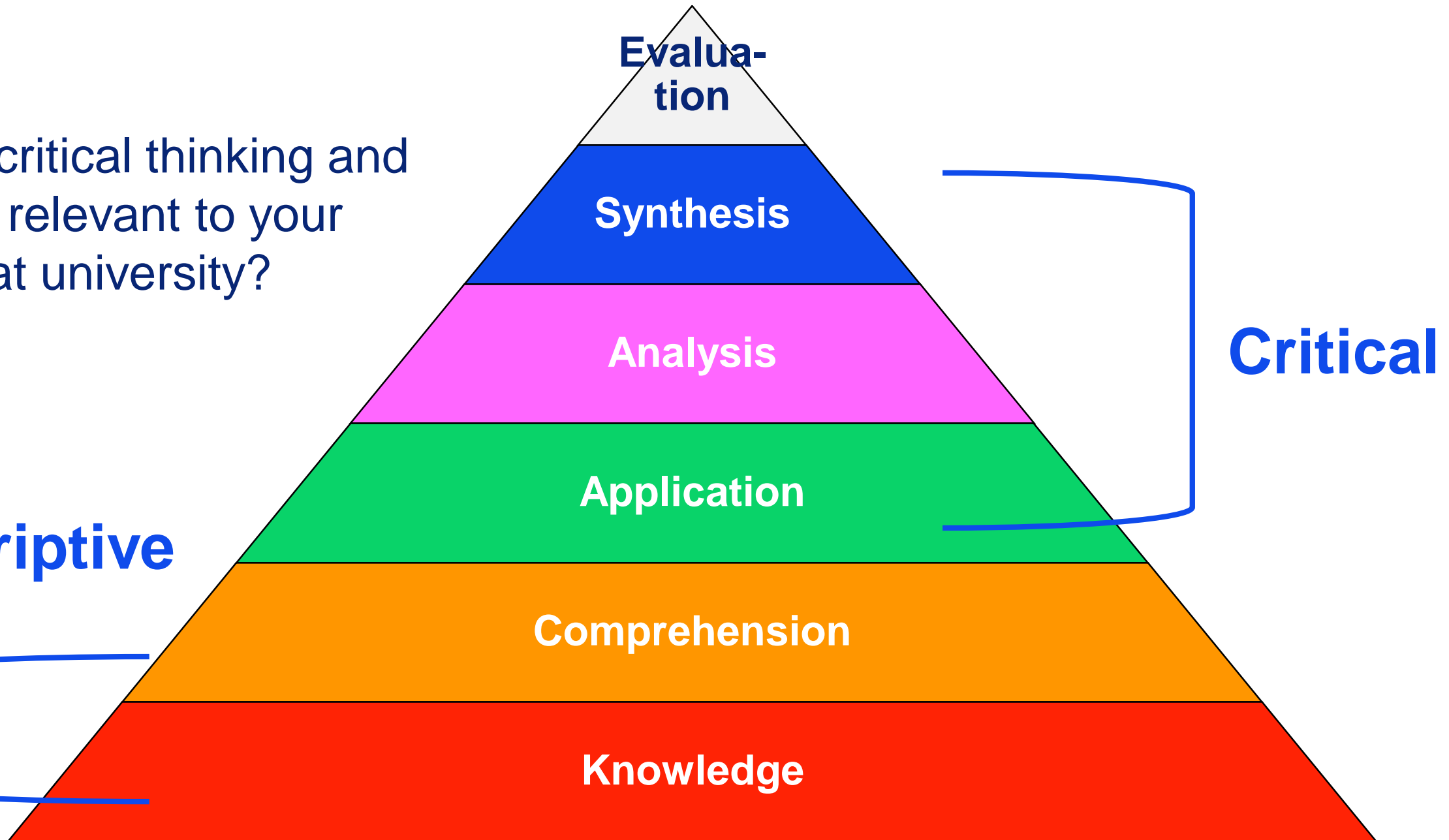
Claims must be **linked** to your argument.

This paragraph clearly links the example to the claim.

The asthma medication 'Amoxypan' has many side effects, one of the most common of which is sleepwalking. The most well-known example occurred in 2016, when a court found that Amoxypan was responsible for a man falling out a window and sustaining severe injuries while sleepwalking (Lee, 2017).

5. Demonstrate critical thinking

What is critical thinking and how is it relevant to your studies at university?



Example

How can you think critically?

“According to research, young people in Australia consider the burgers at Hungry Jacks the very best ”

No critical thinking applied:

- Young people in Australia must like Burger King burgers the most!

Critical thinking applied:

- Who conducted the research?
- What is considered ‘young’?
- Who were Hungry Jack’s burgers compared against?
- How was the research conducted?
- More research may be required

Activity

What critical questions would you ask about the following statement?

“In the reading test, the five children who were taught to read using phonics performed better overall than the five children taught using the whole word method. This shows that the phonics method is a better choice for schools.”

Source: Wallace, M. & Wray, A. 2006 ‘Chapter 1: What It Means to Be Critical’ in *Critical Reading & Writing for Postgraduates*, Thousand Oaks, California, p.5.)

Possible critical questions

- How was the testing conducted and was it the same for both groups?
- Were both groups taught by the same teacher and, if not, might this have affected how well they learnt?
- Is this sample size big enough to generalise across the whole population?

Summary: How to write critically

- **Evaluate** the strength of the available evidence
- **Analyse** how the evidence has been interpreted by others
- **Identify** different claims and opinions from others and any bias or assumptions behind these claims
- **Draw your own conclusions**

The main characteristics of academic writing:

1. Formal style
2. Objective style
3. Precise language
4. Evidence-based arguments
5. Demonstrate critical thinking



Review

Questions?



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