

WRITING IN ACADEMIC STYLE – WORKSHOP

SAMPLE TEXT	Is this a good style for an academic essay?
<p>This stunning 288-page directory lists 500 of the Weirdest & Wackiest web sites on the Internet and is subdivided into six amazing chapters according to subject to make searching even easier!</p> <p>The research has been carried out by an avid team of fun-loving Internet surfers whose brief was to find the funniest and most original sites for you to enjoy - which is just what they did! Go to p41 or p43 to see what I mean!</p> <p>(From Collier, C (series ed.) (2000) <i>500 of the Weirdest & Wackiest Web Sites</i>. Boston MA.: Lagoon.)</p>	<p>No. It's too informal. In particular, it has far too much emphasis for an essay. There are exclamation marks, and words like 'stunning', 'weirdest & wackiest', 'amazing', 'fun-loving' and so on. It's also very personal, addressed directly to 'you'. So it's not a good style for an academic essay; it's a very good style for a light-hearted enjoyable book which you might buy as a present for a young person (which is why I bought it for my daughter).</p>
<p>In this essay I would like to attempt to define a Marxist feminist contextualized stylistics. For this purpose I shall be drawing on the distinctly unfashionable work of Louis Althusser, a Marxist literary theorist, together with feminist stylistic and literary theory (Althusser, 1984; see also Burton, 1982 and Threadgold, 1988a, 1988b). It may be argued that the combination of Marxism, feminism, and stylistics is indeed a heady brew, but it is a necessary combination in order to overcome some of the problems encountered both in traditional stylistic analysis and in Marxist analysis. These theoretical positions can be combined to produce an analysis which is theoretically rigorous and which at the same time enables the reader to engage with the text.</p> <p>(From Mills, S. (1992) 'Knowing Your Place: a Marxist feminist stylistic analysis', in Toolan, M. (ed.) <i>Language, Text and Context</i>. London: Routledge.)</p>	<p>Yes, it's a good academic style - but it's a very advanced one.</p> <p>There are lots of very good things about this style. For instance, it's clearly a serious academic style which isn't afraid of long and technical words but it also uses shorter, simpler words which add energy to it. Look at the last sentence - 'theoretically rigorous' (High Style) is followed by 'enables the reader to engage with the text' which is more vivid and energetic. It's directly personal in some parts - it begins with using 'I' freely, but it's also clear that the author isn't just being personal - she's arguing about an issue which is of general importance. Note the impersonal passive 'these theoretical positions can be combined' at the end. All in all, I think this is a very intelligent style which also has a lot of energy in it.</p> <p>It's the style of a professional academic writing in an academic textbook. So you might find it a bit scary. The confident expert references to a range of theoretical ideas are especially typical of expert writing. So you might feel ready to try to write in a style like this when you're fairly</p>

	<p>advanced in your studies - in your final-year project, for instance. But don't feel that you have to: a style like this is too advanced for most students most of the time.</p> <p>Note also that this sample is from a book which is about literary criticism, which is more personal than most subjects. And it's Marxist and feminist. Feminism especially is more tolerant of personal writing than most other schools of thought. So using 'I' is OK here - it might not be in other situations.</p>
<p>Bailey (1973) and Bickerton (1971) were particularly critical of such attempts to use variable rules. They acknowledge variability in language but insist that it can be explained if we look closely at the environments in which variation occurs and are prepared to relate the environments to one another using some kind of scale. We must note, of course, that they are concerned with individual speech behavior, what they call the <i>isolect</i>, whereas Labov and others have been concerned with group behavior, the <i>sociolect</i>, insisting that such behavior is important in studies of how people actually use language not only to communicate verbally, but for a variety of other purposes too.</p> <p>(from Wardhaugh, R. (1998) <i>An Introduction to Sociolinguistics</i>. Oxford: Black</p>	<p>Yes, it is a good style.</p> <p>It's clear and authoritative. Note how the two most unfamiliar terms, the '<i>idiolect</i>' and '<i>sociolect</i>' are put in italics and briefly defined. The writer is making things easy for the reader, and also showing his own expertise without making a fuss about it.</p> <p>The extract does use the first person - the 'we' is used twice. But the writer isn't speaking at all personally - saying 'we' is just a convenient way of carrying on the argument.</p> <p>Note also how the extract is full of argument. The key words here are 'critical', 'acknowledge', 'but', 'We must note', 'whereas', 'not only ... but.. too'. The writer doesn't have to be very assertive, or give strong personal opinions to keep the argument strong and well structured.</p>

Source: <http://disc.tees.ac.uk/Writing/style/Page15.htm>

PRACTICE

Here is a paragraph that should be written in a more academic tone. Read it through and discuss with your partner, underlining the parts that need to be rewritten.

Given the general knowledge of the health risks associated with ~~of~~ smoking, it's no wonder that ~~heaps of a large number of~~ smokers

~~h~~Have endeavoured ~~tried at some time in their lives~~ to quit. However, in most cases, their attempts are

unsuccessful. People often begin smoking, ~~often when they're adolescents, in their adolescence~~ for ~~lots of~~ numerous reasons, including

~~the example of~~ parental influences and peer pressure ~~from peers~~. Such peer pressure ~~if others in one's group of friends are starting to~~

~~smoke, it~~ can be difficult ~~hard~~ to resist ~~going along with the crowd~~. ~~Once people~~ Upon commencement of ~~start~~ smoking, ~~they're~~

~~likely to get hooked~~ the possibility of addiction is strong. ~~The addiction to smoking~~ This is partly physiological; smokers become ~~used to~~ accustomed to the

effects of nicotine and experience painful withdrawal symptoms ~~when they give it up~~ upon cessation. In addition,

~~people become a~~ psychologically dependent ~~on~~ smoking develops as a method to ~~way of~~ reducing anxiety and coping

with particular circumstancessituations.

Source: https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lisu/content/4_WritingSkills/writing_pdf/super_style.pdf