Academic Tone
Style Basics

• Do not start sentences with conjunctions: or, and, but, yet
• Numbers below a hundred are often written out in full: thirty-one percent, nineteen members
• In scientific work, figures are retained: 31%, 15 °C, 7.4 newtons
• Avoid abbreviations and contractions: can’t = cannot, I’ll = I will, didn’t = did not, won’t = will not, dept = department, e.g. = for example
• Use transitional words throughout your essay: however, furthermore, moreover, indeed, therefore
Colloquialisms and Clichés

• Colloquialism means word or phrase appropriate to conversation and other informal situations
• Avoid slang, chatty and text talk
• Use formal English and basic language

For Example;

Research into learning (higher education) carried out by people like Biggs, Ramsden, Marton and his Scandinavian workmates points the way towards considering the question of the nature of learning in higher education according to two, different approaches (surface and deep learning) adopted by students in universities, let us first have a look at motivation.

Drawing on research into learning in higher education (Biggs, 1987; Ramsden, 1992; Marton et al., 1997), we can note a qualitative distinction between two opposed approaches to learning: deep and surface approaches.
Colloquialisms and Clichés

Think of a less ‘chatty’ alternative:

• The writer is out of order.
• These findings need to be taken with a pinch of salt.
• The argument was a bit over the top.
• The new plans were spot on.
• The kids in the class settled down really quick.
• All the ideas given to the teacher were fab.
• The students thought the test was dead easy.
• Loads of theorists said O’Connor’s idea was rubbish.
Be Impersonal

- Avoid personal pro-nouns such as ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’. They make an essay too personal and subjective.

- As an alternative use:
  It can be seen that.../It has been found that.../Piaget argues...

- ‘I think’ and ‘I feel’ can and does encourage a casual and conversational tone.

- You need to adopt a tone that is formal, neutral and objective

- The only time you can and should be subjective is when you are writing reflectively.
## Personal and Academic Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Writing</th>
<th>Academic Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be intuitive</td>
<td>Uses reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active voice: ‘I find that...’</td>
<td>Passive voice: ‘It was found that...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal</td>
<td>Uses evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data from one person</td>
<td>Wider database</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tangents maybe important (going off one!)</td>
<td>Keeps to a logical sequence</td>
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</table>
Be Cautious

- Academic writing generally sounds cautious. Writers indicate that they are aware that nothing is certain, and do not make generalisations. They use words and phrases that express this lack of certainty - such as:

  - Appears to; seems to; tends to; may; might
  - In some cases this...
  - The evidence suggests that...
Sources and Credibility

It is necessary to be able to differentiate between what is fact and what is opinion.

• Opinions: These are personal beliefs and are not always based on reliable evidence; they may even run contrary to the evidence (e.g. Newspaper articles). **Opinions are unsupported arguments**

• Facts: These can usually be checked against evidence (e.g. Journals, Books). **Facts are supported arguments**

• Evidence: Reasons (which may include facts) given to support a view. Any ideas (yours or those of others) you put forward in your essays must be supported by credible and reliable evidence.
Being precise

• It is important to be clear about what you mean when writing academically. For example, the following sentence is vague: ‘Some people did not like the idea at the time, tried to make the politicians stop, and then attacked him publicly.’

• It is vague because we are unsure as to what the pronouns (it, him) and other phrases (some people, the idea, at the time, the politicians) point to.

• If this sentence were to be precise, it could say: ‘76% of peers in the House of Lords (some people) did not like the idea of banning foxhunting (the idea) in 1996 (at the time), tried to make the government (the politicians) stop, and then attacked the Prime Minister (him) publicly.’