



Notes on academic style

1. clear sentence structure

a) Length

- Only as long as you can read in one breath → Short-term memory (3 seconds, 6 words, 12 syllables)
- Use many main clauses
- Do not pull apart what belongs together
- only one aspect per sentence → combine coherent sentences with several sentences
- Avoid any form of nested or run-on sentences.

b) Rearrange

- create different emphasis by rearranging
- Example: 'Yesterday I saw him.' - 'I saw him yesterday.'
- read aloud → Anything that cannot be read fluently aloud must be changed!
- Sentences consisting of more than 20 words are no longer considered 'easy to understand'; so if you use more words, the sentence structure must be clearer too
- Place strong, emphasised words at the end of a sentence.

2. punctuation marks

- Punctuation marks rhythmise a sentence, control its reception and thus facilitate reading comprehension
- They are also important for the "inner ear", which is always involved even when reading silently.
- Use every opportunity to structure a sentence - including the dash, colon and semicolon.

3. choice of words

There are almost always several ways to express a situation. Make sure you have already found the right word. This applies in particular to words and phrases that frequently appear in academic papers, for example: dealing with, referring to, engaging with, related to, the aim of the paper/section/chapter, etc. Instead, look for alternatives. Instead, look for alternatives: vary established phrases and topoi of academic writing to individualise your own style.



a) *Nouns*

- Words with as few syllables as possible
 - Examples: Anger, agony, pain → powerful, old words
- no -ing, -ism → shorten everything! if there is no other way, explain!
- Address not only the left but also the right side of the brain (use sensory impressions)
 - Example: don't talk about spices, but more concretely → cinnamon
- Delete abstract terms
 - Examples: Space, level, area
- do not judge ('he is educated'), but describe ('on his shelf are Proust and Heidegger')
 - but: only relevant details!

b) *Verbs*

- Good verbs are simple verbs!
 - Examples: have, make, beat
 - Also use less common verbs: e.g. to grumble, to foppen
- Verb = centre of the sentence, all parts of the sentence refer to it and it refers to all parts
- Check appropriateness: does the verb express what I want to express with the sentence?
- Avoid auxiliary verbs ("to be", "to become", "to have") and substantivised verbs (-ing, -ness, -ity) --> resolve verb instead ("considering" = erwägen)

c) *Adjectives*

- useful if differentiation is necessary
- Avoid redundancies
 - Example: tautologies (dark hunch, firm conviction, targeted measure)

d) *Participles (alternative to adjectives)*

- Example: the thirsty heart → the thirsting heart
- active, movement

e) *Metaphors:*

- use, but be careful with metaphors
- Good for comparisons, but do not use used metaphors
- Readers must always have the impression that they are reading something new
- Combine opposites
 - Example: He was as inconspicuous as a drag queen in St Peter's Basilica.





4. tense

- *Present tense:* The present tense is suitable for all forms of discussion and argumentation. This tense emphasises the current thought process, the “now” of what is happening.
- *Past tense:* If, on the other hand, you are tracing the development of a subject or a theoretical discourse or explaining how an issue has developed or differentiated - and you are talking about stages or phases that are completed in time - then the past tense (or imperfect) should be used.
- *Perfect tense:* Finally, if you want to bring something from the past into the present, use the perfect tense.

5. paragraphs

- One thought per paragraph
- write towards a goal
- Structure like a classical drama: Act I: Introduction (arouse curiosity) - Act II: Categorisation (experts, context) - Act III: Conclusion

6. communication situation

Texts are always also an element of communication situations; this means that they are always aimed at readers, regardless of how small or large their number may be. When writing a text, you must therefore always have ‘addressees’ or ‘recipients’ in mind. However, the requirements that this ‘ideal reader’ must fulfil vary from text to text. You therefore need to be clear at the start of a writing project about what kind of ‘ideal reader’ you are writing for.

7. foreign words

Use foreign words carefully. A foreign word does not always signal scientificity; there are often good alternatives. Foreign-language terms or borrowed words should also be used with caution and always marked accordingly. The situation is different with technical terms, which are an important element of academic writing.

