



## Academic Voice

Writing assignments at the university level often require an academic voice. There are certain aspects of academic voice that are more formal than every day, conversational speech. Typically, academic voice avoids informal language and utilizes an authoritative tone.

### Declarative Statements

Sometimes when someone speaks their opinion, they use an “I” statement at the beginning of the sentence. This allows the person listening to know that the statement is that person’s belief. In academic writing, omitting the “I” statement and just stating the claim can be an effective approach.

(Keep in mind, if a teacher advises you to use “I” or “you,” these rules can be broken.)

#### Example of “I” Statement

I believe the Writing Center is a good place to learn.

#### Example of Declarative Statement

The Writing Center is a good place to learn.

Notice the difference in tone between these two statements. Often, an “I” statement can be turned into a declarative sentence by omitting the “I.”

### Formal vs. Informal Language

- To get a sense of academic writing, take a look at academic articles or newspapers. Look at the writing style and the way that statements are organized. Examine details, such as how they present their arguments, specific vocabulary utilized, paragraph transitions, and organization.
- Generally, in academic texts, numbers one through nine are spelled out. Larger numbers such as 17 can be displayed numerically; although, writers in business and technical fields may be instructed to use numerical representation for numbers one through nine (1-9).
- Limit the use of informal sounding contractions such as “wanna,” “gonna,” or “kinda.”
- Limit the use of informal abbreviations, for example, ASAP instead of “as soon as possible.”
- Most often, formal writing avoids foul language and everyday colloquialisms, such as “dude” or “hella.”
- Typically, academic writing avoids the use of the second person, or “you,” to address the reader. Speaking to the reader in the second person can give the impression that an informal conversation is taking place between people who are familiar with each other, which is not usually the case.



## Speaking Authoritatively

- As the writer, you want to establish your ethos, so the reader will believe that you are knowledgeable about your subject.
- Avoid using statements that show doubt and avoid self-deprecating comments about your lack of knowledge of a subject.
- To be more authoritative, support the statements you make with evidence.

## Avoid an Opinionated Tone

To argue a position without sounding opinionated or disrespectful to an opposing view, arguments should utilize standpoints and evidence for support. Counterarguments are important because they show the reader that you understand and respect multiple sides of an argument.

### Example of Opinionated Claim

Some people foolishly believe that the earth is flat, but...

### Example of Neutral Tone

There are people who have concluded that the earth is flat; however, research shows...

Avoid statements about the opposing group's reasoning; focus on the logic of their claims and the evidence that supports your argument. A counterargument lets the reader know that you respect the opposing opinion, even if you don't agree. Limiting adverbs and adjectives can help you achieve a more neutral tone.

## Concision

Do not use fillers when trying create an academic voice. Some people attempt to imitate academic style by making sentences longer and using filler words. It is not always beneficial to use words that could be seen as filler, such as "very," "really," or "literally." Many adverbs such as these are not beneficial because they add wordiness to a sentence without adding content. Unnecessary wordiness reduces the effectiveness of a sentence.

## Sources

Ashford University. Academic Voice. (2013). *Writing Resources*. Retrieved November 02, 2017, from <https://awc.ashford.edu/tocw-academic-voice.html>