

Academic English Skills for Success

Third Edition

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Textbook map

Unit	Topic		Focus on Writing	Focus on Speaking
1	HEALTH	Introduction to features of academic writing and speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize the basic features of academic writing at university level search for and evaluate academic sources of information identify different types of supporting evidence apply reading strategies to academic writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrate different types of academic sources recognize the purpose and features of a tutorial discussion
2	GLOBAL ISSUES	Note-taking and paraphrasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze assignment topics synthesize and link ideas through note-taking and paraphrasing reference multiple sources concurrently to strengthen evidence relating to your stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify the similarities/differences between written and spoken texts transform written language into spoken language during a tutorial discussion
3	ETHICS	Expressing stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify features of a successful academic stance write a stance which has an academic tone, is reasonable and well-justified integrate counter-arguments and rebuttals into a stance to make it more critical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> express agreement and disagreement with the stance of others in speaking use questions to make a tutorial discussion more critical and thoughtful
4	CHINA and ASIA	Synthesizing ideas in a paragraph/section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically connect ideas within a paragraph or a section write accurate and appropriate section headings connect ideas through the use of cohesive devices and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> link your speaking turn to what has been previously said change focus within an academic discussion
5	VALUES	Structuring a complete academic text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply a range of structural features to help you organize an academic text recognize the similarities and differences in report and essay structures create connections across paragraphs and sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflect on your discussion skills articulate strategies to improve your discussion skills in the future

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Introduction for students

Aims

This textbook aims to:

- help you make the transition from studying at a secondary school to studying at an English-medium university,
- develop the general academic English skills you will need to complete your undergraduate degree at university.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the textbook you should be able to:

- identify features of academic writing and speaking,
- search for and evaluate academic sources,
- take effective notes and paraphrase from sources,
- express a personal and critical stance,
- synthesize ideas within a paragraph/section, and
- structure a complete academic text.

How to make the most of this textbook

Apply skills practised in this textbook to your other courses.

The work you do in this textbook should be useful in many, if not all, of your university courses. You should make a concerted effort to apply what you learn in this textbook to the writing and speaking you do in other courses.

Participate actively.

After working through this textbook, you will have practised your academic writing, read a number of academic texts, and participated in a series of academic discussions. Many of these tasks will require you to interact with your classmates in order to benefit from a variety of perspectives. You will get the most out of these tasks if you participate actively in and out of class.

Do complementary work.

Your teacher may supplement the work in this textbook with other work on grammar, vocabulary, citation and referencing skills and tasks on how to avoid plagiarism. This work is very important and will help you to achieve the aims listed above.

Caveat

For pedagogical purposes, all the sample essays and reports including the accompanying citations and references in the third edition of this textbook have been adapted to varying degrees. The citation and referencing style in this textbook is based on the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seventh Edition.

Contact

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1

HEALTH

Introduction to features of academic writing and speaking

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ recognize the basic features of academic writing at university level,
- ▶ search for and evaluate academic sources of information,
- ▶ identify different types of supporting evidence,
- ▶ recognize the purposes and features of a tutorial discussion,
- ▶ understand different types of reading strategies, and
- ▶ apply reading strategies to academic writing.



ACADEMIC WRITING



Task 1

Reflect on the health care system in your country

In 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (para. 2). Health care systems within countries therefore aim to organize people, institutions and resources in order to promote the broad definition of health offered by the WHO.

Use the table below to circle the type of health care system used in your country and rate your opinion of this system’s impact on society’s physical, mental and social well-being.

Circle the structure of health care in your country	Your opinion of this system’s impact on . . .	
direct payment by the user	. . . physical well-being (e.g., its influence on physical disease)	poor excellent
taxes from the public	. . . mental well-being (e.g., its influence on mental illnesses)	poor excellent
national health insurance	. . . social well-being (e.g., its ability to cater for the health needs of all groups of people within a society)	poor excellent
private health insurance		
a combination of the above		

Now share your thoughts with a partner and try to reach a consensus regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the health care system in your country.



Task 2

Discuss the success of the health care system

Your teacher will put you in groups of four and assign each member a different health issue as follows:

- A: Obesity
- B: Smoking
- C: Stress
- D: Air pollution

Imagine you are part of a government committee deciding how to reform the health care system in your country. However, there are only enough funds to reform one health issue. Your aim is to gain these funds to tackle the issue assigned to you by:

1. explaining the possible shortcomings of the current system in dealing with your assigned issue, and
2. suggesting practical solutions to this problem.

Use the table below to prepare your argument.

Improving our health care system

Your assigned health issue

Reason(s) for my viewpoint

A practical solution

2

GLOBAL
ISSUES

Note-taking and paraphrasing

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ analyze assignment topics,
- ▶ take notes from sources within a plan,
- ▶ synthesize ideas through note-taking and paraphrasing,
- ▶ reference multiple sources concurrently to strengthen evidence relating to your stance,
- ▶ use linking words and phrases to show the relationship between arguments and counter-arguments, and
- ▶ transform written language into spoken language during a tutorial discussion.



ACADEMIC WRITING



Task 1 Establish a multinational corporation

Imagine that you are a young entrepreneur with a strong passion for global business, and you are tasked with designing your very own multinational corporation (MNC). Work in groups of three to explore the world of global business, and complete Steps A to D below. Unleash your creativity and criticality as much as you can.

A. Your MNC's Name:

Decide on a unique name for your MNC. Be creative and original.

B. Industry and Products/Services:

Choose an industry in which your MNC operates (e.g., technology, fashion, food, medicine). Determine the specific products or services that your MNC offers within that industry. Consider the target market and competitive advantage.

C. Global Presence:

Identify at least three countries where your MNC will have a significant presence. Discuss the reasons for selecting those countries such as market potential, available resources, or strategic advantages.

D. Cultural Adaptation:

Consider how your MNC will adapt to the local cultures and customs of the countries in which it operates. Consider factors such as language, communication styles, and cultural sensitivities.

Choose a note taker to record your discussion outcomes in the space below.

A. Your MNC's Name:	B. Industry and Products/Services:
C. Global Presence:	D. Cultural Adaptation:

The importance of understanding an assignment topic

Recall from the previous unit that the academic writing process begins with a search for a range of information on the topic from different viewpoints.

However, before you are able to begin this search, it is necessary for you to ensure that you fully understand the assignment topic, so you can read selectively and critically.





Task 2

Analyze an assignment topic

Imagine you are asked to write a report on the following topic, which relates to your discussion in the preceding task:

Examine the complexities of multinational corporations through identifying the key challenges they encounter and proposing effective solutions to address them.

Look at the five steps in the left column below which can help you prepare for the writing process. Then, complete the gaps in the right column. When you are finished with each step, compare your answers with your groupmates.

Steps in analyzing an assignment topic	Application of these steps to a given topic
<p>1. Circle the directive verbs and think about what they ask you to do.</p>	<p>Examine the complexities of multinational corporations through identifying the key challenges they encounter and proposing effective solutions to address them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Examine</i> asks you to: • <i>Identify</i> asks you to: • <i>Propose</i> asks you to: <p>Some other common directive verbs you may come across in report writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Compare and contrast</i> ask you to: • <i>Analyze</i> asks you to: • <i>Evaluate</i> asks you to:
<p>2. Underline the main content words and think about what they mean.</p>	<p>Examine the complexities of multinational corporations through identifying the key challenges they encounter and proposing effective solutions to address them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

3

ETHICS

Expressing stance

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ identify features of a successful academic stance,
- ▶ write a stance which has an academic tone, is reasonable and is well-justified,
- ▶ integrate counter-arguments and rebuttals into a stance to make it more critical,
- ▶ express agreement and disagreement with the stance of others in speaking, and
- ▶ use questions to make a tutorial discussion more critical and thoughtful.



ACADEMIC WRITING



Task 1

Express a personal opinion about an ethical issue

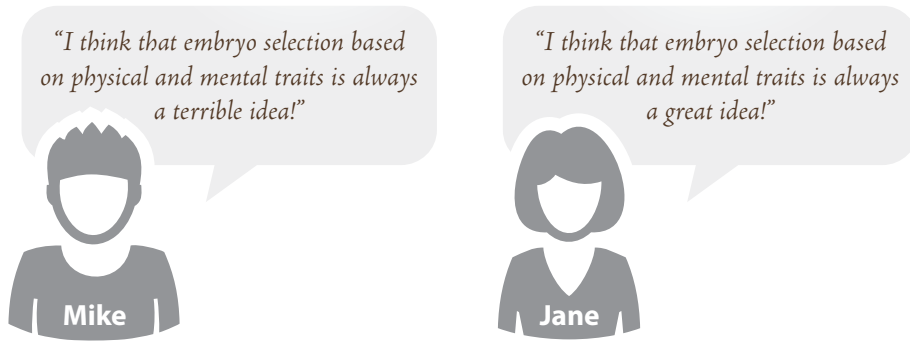
Imagine that you could go forward in time to before your future children (one male and one female) were born. At this time in the future, parents are able to select from a range of their own embryos for transplantation based on a “menu” of traits and abilities. However, they are able to choose only four traits for each child.

Look at the menu of traits below and answer the following questions:

1. Which four traits would you choose for your female child?
2. Which four traits would you choose for your male child?
3. Do you think it is ethically acceptable to use technology for embryo selection in this way? Why? Or why not?

“Mental” traits	Physical characteristics	“Athletic” traits	Personality traits
mathematical ability	hair colour	strong upper body	studiousness
musical ability	eye colour	strong lower body	dependability
ability to be empathetic	height	good balance	self-confidence
spirituality	weight	flexibility	sociability [e.g., ability to make friends]
ability to be loving	body type	good coordination	sensitivity
good memory	ability to age well	good endurance	independence

Mike and Jane are undergraduate students. They have two very different stances on the use of technology for embryo selection based on physical and mental traits.



These personal opinions are clear, but they are **not suitable** as an academic stance.



Task 2

Analyze the language of a successful academic stance

Look at the table below. Jane and Mike improve their personal opinions in four ways to make them more appropriate for an academic audience. Identify what these four changes are. Record the changes in the column on the left.

	Mike	Jane	
	I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a terrible idea!	I think that embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a great idea!	Stance is too personal/emotional, not reasonable, not justified and not critical.
Change made	I think that Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a terrible idea! ethically unacceptable.	I think that Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is always a great idea! ethically acceptable.	
	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is mostly ethically unacceptable.	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is, on the whole , ethically acceptable.	
	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is mostly ethically unacceptable because it will lead to increased	Embryo selection based on physical and mental traits is, on the whole, ethically acceptable because parents have the moral	

4

CHINA
and ASIA

Synthesizing ideas in a paragraph or section

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ logically connect ideas within a paragraph or a section,
- ▶ write accurate and appropriate section headings,
- ▶ connect ideas through the use of cohesive devices and strategies,
- ▶ synthesize ideas from multiple sources,
- ▶ link your speaking turn to what has been previously said, and
- ▶ change focus within an academic discussion.



ACADEMIC WRITING



Task 1 Prepare for a role-play discussion

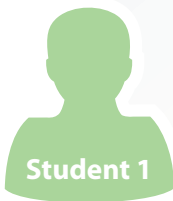
Discuss the following question with a classmate and justify your reasoning:

In China, when addressing eldercare issues, which aspect should be prioritised: Healthcare services or suitable accommodations through social welfare programmes?



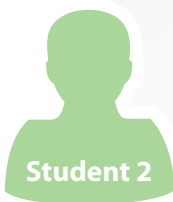
Task 2 Participate in a role-play discussion

Form a group of three with your classmates. Each student will choose one of the following roles:



Student 1

You are a representative from the Ministry of Civil Affairs in China. You are responsible for overseeing policies related to senior citizens and ensuring that social welfare and support for elderly care institutions are properly in place. You firmly believe that these issues should be given a top priority. Your role is to convince the top leader that social welfare and support for elderly care institutions should be the focus to address the eldercare challenges in China.



Student 2

You are a representative from the National Health Commission. You are responsible for healthcare services for the elderly population and believe that this should be given a top priority regarding the eldercare issues in China. Your role is to convince the top leader that healthcare services should be the focus.

5

VALUES

Structuring a complete academic text

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ▶ apply a range of structural features to help you organize an academic text clearly,
- ▶ recognize the similarities and differences in report and essay structures,
- ▶ create connections within your writing that direct the reader backwards and forwards, and
- ▶ articulate strategies to improve your discussion skills in the future.



ACADEMIC WRITING



Task 1

Compare opinions about reality TV

Reality TV has become extremely popular over the last 20 years. Before reading two texts on the topic, find out about other students' views on the topic. Follow the steps:

Step 1. Choose one question from the boxes below and write it on a piece of paper. Find a partner and discuss your chosen questions. Exchange opinions and give an example from your experience to support your stance.

Step 2. After two minutes, exchange question papers with your partner so that you have a different question. Find another student and ask each other your questions. Continue doing this until you have shared opinions with four students.

Step 3. After the activity, tell the class about the most interesting response you heard.

1. Do you enjoy watching reality TV?
Why / Why not?

2. Why do you think reality TV has become so popular worldwide?

3. Is reality TV more beneficial or problematic to society?

4. Can reality TV be considered in any way educational?

5. Do you think children should watch reality TV?

6. What do you think motivates people to appear on reality TV?

Structuring academic texts

Academic texts are characterized by a clear structure which is represented in a number of ways, e.g., with *headings*, *subheadings*, a *numbering system*, *topic sentences* and *connections* drawn between *sentences* and *paragraphs/sections*. If a writer does not structure a text clearly, or as expected, it can be difficult to follow and it may be perceived as lacking coherence.

The structure depends on the nature of the text, who it is for and what the context is. Some texts have a more obvious structure than others. For example:

- **A report** usually has headings, a numbering system, and even a table of contents if it is a long report. These help to guide the reader through the text.
- **An essay** has an introduction which tells the reader the focus and often the structure of the essay. It also has topic sentences to help guide the reader through the text. A journal article has an abstract and headings.



Preparing to read

In this unit you will work with two texts about reality TV. Half of you will focus on the essay and the other half the report. You will then share your findings about structural features of the texts. First, form groups of four and decide who will read which text; two students should read the essay, and the other two the report.



Task 2 Identify the stance

Step 1. Skim through your text to identify the **overall stance** and **two main arguments**. If you are reading the essay, focus on the introduction, topic sentences and conclusion; if you are reading the report, focus on the introduction, headings and conclusion. Record them in the table on the next page with your groupmate who has read the same text.

Step 2. When you have finished, compare your findings with the two students who read the other text and complete the final statement comparing the stances of the two pieces. Which arguments do you recognize from your initial discussions in Task 1?

ACADEMIC ENGLISH

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

This book features five theme-based units on cross-disciplinary academic English skills, focusing on the needs of first-year undergraduate students. Each unit covers academic writing, reading, and speaking skills. The units progressively take students through the steps needed to complete three common academic assignments: the essay, report, and tutorial discussion. These steps include searching for quality sources, note-taking, establishing a critical stance, formulating evidence-based arguments, synthesizing information from multiple sources, and structuring academic texts. Each unit also provides opportunities for students to analyse texts, apply their critical thinking skills, practise what they have learnt in productive tasks, and reflect upon their progress.

This book is aimed at first-time university students. Many of the readings are related to China and a broader Asian context. As such, it appeals to first-year university students in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan.

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