What is academic writing?

- Writing in an academic setting
- By scholars for scholars, e.g. research articles
- Logically structured
- Objective
- Combines theory and empirical data
- Analytic and critical
- Develops a central problem area
- Draws conclusions
- Argues in relation to what others have said/written
- Includes references
- Formal in style

(after Dysthe et al. 2002:19-20)

Two major kinds of writing

- Writer-oriented
  - Audience: self
  - Purpose: personal, exploration of ideas
  - Language: informal
  - Forms: journals, notes, rough drafts

- Reader-oriented
  - Audience: others
  - Purpose: communication between individuals
  - Language: formal
  - Forms: essays, papers, theses, business letters

(Logically structured)

- Clear overall structure
  - Introduction (Background, Aims, etc)
  - Method & Material (How was the study done? Materials and methods used?)
  - Results (What did the study find?)
  - Discussion and Conclusion (Implications of what the study found, further studies, etc.)
Feedback

• Peer response

  • Having a fellow student read and comment on your work

Coherence

• The paragraph as a thought unit
  • Topic sentence
  • Supporting sentences

One idea and its supporting arguments = one paragraph.

  • Deduction: from general to specific

Example of a Deductive Paragraph

Hurricanes, which are also called cyclones, exert tremendous power. These violent storms are often a hundred miles in diameter, and their winds can reach velocities of seventy-five miles per hour or more. Furthermore, the strong winds and heavy rainfall that accompany them can completely destroy a small town in a couple of hours. The energy that is released by a hurricane in one day exceeds the total energy consumed by humankind throughout the world in one year.

(Oshima & Hogue 1999)

Writing paragraphs

Identify the topic sentences in the following paragraph:

Though the United States has spent billions of dollars on foreign aid programs, it has captured neither the affection nor esteem of the rest of the world. In many countries today Americans are cordially disliked; in others merely tolerated. The reasons for this sad state of affairs are many and varied, and some of them are beyond the control of anything this country might do to try to correct them. But harsh as it may seem to the ordinary citizen, filled as he is with good intentions and natural generosity, much of the foreigners’ animosity has been generated by the way Americans behave.

(Edward Hall, (1973), The silent language, p. xiii)

Downloaded from http://www.uefap.com/writing/exercise/parag/paragex3.htm (date of access 29 August 2011)

Writing paragraphs

Identify the topic sentences in the following paragraph:

Though the United States has spent billions of dollars on foreign aid programs, it has captured neither the affection nor esteem of the rest of the world. In many countries today Americans are cordially disliked; in others merely tolerated. The reasons for this sad state of affairs are many and varied, and some of them are beyond the control of anything this country might do to try to correct them. But harsh as it may seem to the ordinary citizen, filled as he is with good intentions and natural generosity, much of the foreigners’ animosity has been generated by the way Americans behave.

(Edward Hall, (1973), The silent language, p. xiii)

Information structure

• The information structure principle:
  Known/given info first – unknown/new info last

  My cousin bought a new car. The car is red.

  • Principle of end weight:
  Heavy subject noun phrases are placed later in the clause

  A very relevant and interesting issue that needs attention is unemployment.

  Unemployment is a very relevant and interesting issue that needs attention.
Information structure

• "The basic coloration of the leopard cat is usually yellowish, grey or reddish with a whitish belly. Dark spots dot its body. Bands are formed by regular merging of these dots."

• "The basic coloration of the leopard cat is usually yellowish, grey or reddish with a whitish belly. It is also dotted with dark spots. These spots are in regular lines merging to form bands."

Mix long and short sentences

Primarily short sentences:
(1) There is one positive result of the rising crime rate. (2) This has been the growth of neighborhood crime prevention programs. (3) These programs really work. (4) They teach citizens to patrol their neighborhoods. (5) They teach citizens to work with the police. (6) They have dramatically reduced crime in cities and towns across the country. (7) The idea is catching on.
(Fawcett 2007:294)

Avoid vagueness

(1) One cause of the falling crime rate in some cities is the growth of neighborhood crime prevention programs. (2) These programs really work. (3) By patrolling their neighborhoods and working with the police, citizens have shown that they can dramatically reduce crime. (4) The idea is catching on.
(Fawcett 2007:295)

Avoid wordiness

• In my opinion I think that the financial aid system at Ellensville Junior College is in need of reform
• The financial aid system at Ellensville Junior College needs reform
(Fawcett 2007:328)

Linking strategies

• Repetition of key words or phrases
• Use of synonyms for such key words
• Use of pronouns
• Use of connective words
(Björk & Räisänen 2003)
How is Coherence Achieved in this Paragraph?

“Since readers all read differently it is important that you make the logical links between your sentences explicit. The more clearly you indicate such links concretely in the text, the greater the chance of helping your reader follow and understand your line of thought. Naturally, there is a limit, you are not writing academic papers for schoolchildren. However, the risk of oversimplification is a minor one. The vast majority of students fail to be explicit enough.”

(Björk & Räisänen, 187)

“Since readers all read differently it is important that you make the logical links between your sentences explicit. The more clearly you indicate such links concretely in the text, the greater the chance of helping your reader follow and understand your line of thought. Naturally, there is a limit, you are not writing academic papers for schoolchildren. However, the risk of oversimplification is a minor one. The vast majority of students fail to be explicit enough.”

(Björk & Räisänen, 187)

GÖTEBORGSK UNIVERSTET

Coherence – signposts, linking (connective) words

Addition: also, and, as well, besides, beyond that, furthermore, in addition, moreover, what is more

Attitude: naturally, of course, certainly, strangely enough, luckily, fortunately, unfortunately, admittedly, undoubtedly

Comparison: also, as well, both, in the same way, likewise, similarly, in comparison

Contrast: although, but, even though, however, by contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, whereas, yet, in spite of, while

Emphasis: above all, especially, indeed, in fact, in particular, most important, surely

GÖTEBORGSK UNIVERSTET

Coherence, cont.

Hedging: perhaps, may be due to, maybe, probably, presumably, possibly

Illustration: as a case in point, an illustration, for example, for instance, in particular, one such, yet another

Order: first, in the first place, firstly, to begin with, second, third, etc., last, lastly, finally

Result/effect: and so, as a consequence, consequently, as a result, because of this, therefore, hence, thus, so, accordingly

Summary: all in all, finally, in brief, in short, in conclusion, to sum up, in other words, on the whole, summing up

GÖTEBORGSK UNIVERSTET

Let’s look closer at how to...

from MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

• Add information
• Compare and contrast
• Exemplify
• Express cause and effect
• Express personal opinion
• Express possibility and certainity
• Introduce a concession
• Introduce topics and related ideas
• List items
• Reformulate
• Quote and report
• Summarize and draw conclusions

GÖTEBORGSK UNIVERSTET

Adding Information

• in addition – moreover – furthermore – other – another

• “After the election, we asked whether the parties should change their leaders, their policies or both. In addition, we asked about voting preferences.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Adding Information cont.

• Moreover – used to add a “final powerful argument”

* "When the prisoner is released, his situation will be very painful because he will have to reintegrate into society. Moreover, he will have the greatest difficulties of integration because of his past as a prisoner.

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Moreover cont.

• “There was an assumption that whoever did take up the office would closely reflect Lee’s views. It was likely, moreover, that candidates would be restricted to former ministers and senior civil servants.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Comparing and Contrasting

• resemblance – similarity – parallel – analogy

* “A useful analogy for understanding Piaget’s theory is to view the child as a scientist who is seeking a ‘theory’ to explain complex phenomena.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Comparing and Contrasting cont.

• contrast – difference – distinction – the contrary – the opposite – the reverse – resemble – comparable – correspond

* “There is a sharp distinction between domestic politics and international politics.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Consider:

• resemblance and similarity tend to occur with: certain, close, remarkable, striking, strong, superficial

• contrast tends to occur with: direct, marked, sharp, stark, striking

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Exemplification

• for example – as an illustration – a case in point – for instance – such as – exemplify – e.g. – i.e. – viz.

* “This is very much a generational problem. Consider, for example, the new students who begin courses at universities and polytechnics. They cannot remember when Britain was not part of the European Community.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Exemplification cont.
"Nowadays children play with technological toys (i.e. video games)."

"It implied primogeniture amongst males, i.e. inheritance by the eldest son."

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Expressing Cause and Effect
because – due to – the cause – the factor – therefore – thus – accordingly – consequently – hence – thus – the effect – the implication – the outcome – arise from – stem from

"Differences in performance can be measured. Employees can therefore be rewarded differently and appropriately."

NOTE: Learners tend to overuse therefore at the beginning of sentences. More frequent inside sentences.

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Expressing Personal Opinions
it is reasonable – it is essential – it seems that – (in my opinion) – (in my view)

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Remember
The writer is usually invisible

– Rephrase
I will write about the situation in my country.
This essay will focus on the situation in Sweden.

– Passivize
We carried out the investigation in 2006.
The investigation was carried out in 2006.

Expressing Possibility and Certainty

“One possible explanation for these findings is that people take time to adjust to living in residential homes.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

Introducing a Concession
however – nevertheless – nonetheless – although – though – even if – albeit – despite – in spite of

NOTE: learners tend to overuse however at the beginning of sentences

NOTE II: despite is much more frequent in academic writing than in spite of

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Introducing Topics and Related Ideas

consider – discuss – examine – the subject – the aim – the issue – another/further/next/last question – the objective – the topic – concern – emphasis – focus of attention

Common in speech: thing – by the way

Listing Items

First/firstly/first of all – second – third – next - finally

AVOID: last but not least…

Reformulation

i.e. – that is – that is to say – in other words – namely – viz.

“This was particularly so in areas with larger farms, namely Derbyshire, Leicestershire, South Wales, and Speyside.”

Summarizing and Drawing Conclusions

in summary – in sum – to summarize – in conclusion – it is reasonable to conclude

INFREQUENT: in a nutshell – in brief – all in all – we can conclude

Quoting and Reporting


Fill in the blanks with a connective word

1. The documents will be scrutinised by the police; ______ they will be sent back to the relevant authority.
2. The retailers have been making losses, ______ they intend to wind up their business.
3. Wash the potatoes first. ______ you can boil them.
4. We have been trying to contact Michael for the past few days. ______ we managed to trace him to a hotel in town.
5. Life in the country may not be as exciting as life in the city. ______ you are close to nature which provides peace and quietness.
6. Let us not be complacent with ourselves ______ we may lose out in the final round.

Key
1. The documents will be scrutinised by the police; then they will be sent back to the relevant authority.
2. The retailers have been making losses, therefore they intend to wind up their businesses.
3. Wash the potatoes first. Afterwards you can boil them.
4. We have been trying to contact Michael for the past few days. Eventually we managed to trace him to a hotel in town.
5. Life in the country may not be as exciting as life in the city. Nevertheless, you are close to nature which provides peace and quietness.
6. Let us not be complacent with ourselves. Otherwise we may lose out in the final round.

References
• Indicate your sources
• All sources mentioned in the text must occur in the list of references. Similarly, the list of references may only include works mentioned in the text.

Using References
• Academic writing always relates to sources, but you must indicate when, and where it comes from, in a parenthesis (Smith 2001, 63), or in a footnote.
• Plagiarism is to:
  • Copy text word-by-word without quotation marks or reference.
  • Summarize or paraphrase without a reference.
  • Translate a text without giving a reference.
  • Take sections of a text and just change a few words to synonyms, whether you are giving a reference or not.

Common Knowledge
It is not necessary to give a reference for:
• Commonly accepted dates of important events (“For this discovery, Professor Arvid Carlsson was awarded the Nobel Prize in year 2000”)
• Facts that can be found in standard reference works: “The human genome consists of DNA.” “Beijing is the capital of China.”
• General observations that anyone can make: “The Internet is an excellent tool for finding information.”
• Information that is shared by everyone in the intended audience/discipline. “Autosomal hereditary disorders are either dominant or recessive.” Reference needed in some contexts.
• Questions to ask: Is the fact widely known? Can it be disputed?

References in the text
• Respect for ideas and results
• Be selective
• Short quotations (1-3 lines): “…….” (in the running text)
• Long quotations (more than 3 lines): within a new paragraph with extra indentation, often in a smaller fontsize
• Never change the content of a quotation

Quotations
There are different referencing systems. This presentation will focus on what is known as the Harvard system, but there are two general rules you must always follow:
1) Be consistent! Make sure that you always cite a certain type of source or provide source data in the same way throughout your text
2) Be observant! In most situations where you write academic text, you are not the one to decide which system to use. In other words, make sure that you know the expected guidelines and follow them.
Quotations

Name, year of publishing, page
describing the format:

In this article, Goldberg (1995:210) argues
that…

OR

Another view is that these facts cannot be
determined without considering more data
(Goldberg 1995:210).

List of references

Article in a journal:
Sag, I. 1997. English relative clause constructions. Journal of
Linguistics 33:431-483.

Article in a larger volume:
Kenstowicz, M. 1989. The null subject parameter in Modern
Arabic dialects. The Null Subject Parameter, ed. by O. Jaeggli & K.

Internet source:

List of references

Book, a single author:
Gruyter.

Book, two authors:

Book, more than two authors:
A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London:
Longman.

Page references

A single page: (1995:34)
Alternatively:
(1995:38) = p. 38 and the following page
(1995:38f) = p. 38 and the following few pages

Number of authors

• A single author: (Goldberg 1995)
• Two authors: (Goldberg & Johnson 2002)
• More than two authors: (Goldberg et al. 2003)
• Several works: (Goldberg 1995; Smith 2001)
• No official author: (2003:36)

Academic writing seminar I & II

Works mentioned

Dysthe, O., F. Hertzberg & T. Løkensgard-Heal. 2002. Skriva för att lära:
skriva höher utbildning. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
Pearson Education.
University Press.
THANK YOU!

http://www.utbildning.gu.se/student/sprakhandledning

joakim.jahlmar@sprak.gu.se