Academic writing tips with Academic Word List vocabulary

Use some of the words below to give advice on good academic writing.

abstract
courage/ accuracy/ inaccurate/ inaccuracy
adequate/ inadequate/ inadequacy
advocate
aid
alternative
analysis/ analyse
approach/ approachable
approximate/ approximation
assign/ assignment
assume/ assumption
attribute
author
authoritative
bias/ biased
category/ categorize
chart
clarify/ clarity/ clarification
coherence/ coherent/ incoherent
comprehend/ comprehensive
concept/ conceptual/ conceptualise
conclude/ conclusion/ (in)conclusive
consent/ consensual
contact/ contactable
contradict/ contradiction
controversial/ controversy
converse/ correspondence
criteria
define/ definition
diverse/ diversity
draft
eliminate/ elimination
ensure
extract
format
fundamental
grant
highlight
ignorant/ ignorance
impact
incorporate/ incorporation
infer/ inference
instance
issue
label
minimal/ minimise/ minimum
norm/ protocol

accompany
acknowledge/ acknowledgement
adjust
affect
alter/ alteration
ambiguous/ ambiguity/ unambiguous
appendix/ appendices
appropriate/ inappropriate/ appropriateness
arbitrary/ arbitrariness
assistance
attach/ attached/ unattached/ attachment
author
aware/ unaware/ awareness
brief/ brevity
chapter
cite/ citation
clause
compile/ compilation
comprise
confer/ conference
conflict/ conflicting
consistent/ consistency/ inconsistent
content
contribute/ contributor/ contribution
convention/ conventional/ unconventional
credit
data/ figures/ statistics
differentiate
draft
emphasise/ emphasis
error
feature
framework
goal
guideline
hypothesis/ hypotheses/ hypothetical
illustration/ illustrate
imply/ implication
indicate/ indicative
insert/ insertion
interpret/ interpretation
journal
methodology
modify/ modification
objective
option/ optional
paragraph/ paragraphing
precise/ precision/ imprecise
process
publish/ publication(s)/ (un)published
reject/ rejection
scope
source
straightforward
style/ stylistic
subordinate
summarize
thesis/ theses
overall
precede
principal
proportion/ proportionate/ disproportionate
quote/ quotation
relevance/ relevant/ irrelevance/ irrelevant
significant/ significance/ insignificant
specify/ specific
structure/ structural
submit/ submission
sufficient/ insufficient
theory/ theoretical
utilise/ utilisation

Useful words for giving advice
avoid
because/ as
best
can
difficult
don’t
example
generally
if
important
impossible
main
make sure
may
must
need
never
probably
require/ requirements
should
some people believe
sometimes
therefore
unless
usually
worth

Ask about any words above you don’t understand, couldn’t link to the speaking activity, etc.
Put at least one of the words above into each of the gaps below to make good advice about academic writing.

1. “The ____________________________________” is an alternative to “I” in academic writing, though it can seem pretentious.
2. A __________________________________ can be labelled “Fig. 1”, but shouldn’t be referred to as “The figure”, as that means “The number”.
3. A good title can really __________________________ how many people read your paper, and therefore also influence how often your paper is cited in the future.
4. A second ___________________ of your writing should be edited versions of the first attempt, not the original version with notes. However, you can mark the changes to make them stand out, by using red fonts etc.
5. ___________________________________________________ of data should be written after the diagram or table, perhaps following a more basic description.
6. Any ____________________________________________ made in researching or writing the paper should be written near the beginning of a paper.
7. Don’t confuse a summary and a ___________________________________.
8. Don’t confuse magazines and academic (usually meaning peer-reviewed) __________________________ — New Scientist and National Geographic, to give two examples, aren’t good models for your own academic writing.
9. Email approaches to academics who you have no connection to should be polite but state the reason for __________________________________________________________________________ them quite near the beginning of the email.
10. ____________________________________________ your ideas while also sounding sufficiently academic can be difficult.
11. If you ____________________________ a quote (to make it understandable out of context or to shorten it), any changes should be marked with “…” and “[ ]”.
12. If you want to __________________________________ a particular government policy, that should usually be left until the final conclusion.
13. ____________________________________________ grammar and information in citations can be marked with the expression "[sic]" in square brackets.
14. ___________________________________________ supporting evidence is the most common reason for rejecting academic papers, with being too similar to other research being the second most common cause for having a paper turned down.
15. It can be difficult to make your language sufficiently academic and diplomatic without making the meaning ______________________________________.
16. It’s sometimes worth pasting things into an email rather than including an __________________________________________________________________________, as it saves formatting problems and being blocked by people’s spam filters.
17. It’s worth mentioning when sources are particularly __________________________________________________________________________ and so should be taken more seriously.
18. Most publishers automatically __________________________ permission to quote from their publications, but it can be difficult and time consuming to get in contact with the right person.
19. Nowadays, you will probably need ___________________________________________ to use long or many extracts from a single publication. However, it’s not always obvious who to write to in order to get such permission.
20. Only very long papers need ________________________________________ – shorter ones should be just be divided into sections.
21. Perhaps the most important factors to make sure that your paper has an ________________________________________ are its title and where it is published, with publishing the right ideas and the right time (matching the zeitgeist) also being important.
22. Phrasal verbs and other idioms are generally not ______________________________ in academic writing, unless there is no other way of saying something.
23. Professors obviously won’t correct the grammar in your essays, but it can be worth asking for extra feedback on your ________________________________________.
24. Some people believe it is impossible to avoid __________________________ in academic writing, so you should disclose all information which could affect your judgement.
25. Some publications demand an __________________________ summarizing the content of your paper, perhaps to be used on the index page of their website.
26. Some publications have their own ___________________________ on how to write for them, although some also refer you to style manuals such as the APA or The Chicago Manual of Style.
27. Starting a new paragraph is never ____________________ – it is usually due to changing topic (in some way), but also can be because the paragraph has gone on too long.
28. The ___________________________ of a proof-reader doesn’t usually need to be mentioned in your paper.
29. The ___________________________ that online editors want can vary, including .doc (rather than more recent versions), .txt, or just the text pasted into an email.
30. The main thing to decide before starting to write an academic paper is your ________________________________________, in other words what you want to achieve by publishing that information in that way.
31. The most important thing is to ________________________________________ that your ideas can be understood.
32. The punctuation etc of an academic paper may have to be ___________________________ to meet the requirements of a particular publication.
33. When style guides ___________________________ each other it is usually best to follow the APA’s advice, unless the guidelines from the publication state otherwise.
34. Word limits are rarely __________________________, so you should stick to them exactly.
35. You can sometimes include ___________________________ of help with your research and/ or paper such as a list of people who you want to thank.
36. You must ___________________________ where your ideas come from, even if you aren’t directly quoting someone.
37. You need to be ___________________________ with use of not of “I”, American or British English, referencing conventions, etc.
38. You need to ___________________________ between direct quotes and paraphrases of people’s ideas.
39. You need to use ___________________________ sources, for example not using the same dictionary for definitions throughout.
40. You should show an ___________________________ of the limits of your research and the ability to come to conclusion based on it, for example in a section on this topic.
Mixed answers
These words can go in the gaps above (without needing to change the grammar).

- abstract
- acknowledge
- acknowledgement
- adjusted
- advocate
- affect
- aid/ assistance
- alter
- ambiguous.
- analysis
- appropriate
- approximate
- arbitrary
- assignment
- assumptions
- attachment
- author
- authoritative
- awareness
- bias
- chapters
- chart
- conclusion
- consent
- consistent
- contacting
- contradict
- differentiate
- diverse
- draft
- emphasising
- ensure
- format
- goals/ objectives
- grant
- guidelines
- impact
- inaccurate
- inadequate
- journals

Check with the suggested answers or as a class. Other answers are possible, so please check any which you filled with different words.
Suggested answers

1. "The __________ author ___________" is an alternative to "I" in academic writing, though it can seem pretentious.

2. A _______________ chart _______________ can be labelled "Fig. 1", but shouldn’t be referred to as "The figure", as that means "The number".

3. A good title can really _______ affect ______________ how many people read your paper, and therefore also influence how often your paper is cited in the future.

4. A second _______________ draft ____________________ of your writing should be edited versions of the first attempt, not the original version with notes. However, you can mark the changes to make them stand out, by using red fonts etc.

5. _______________ analysis ______________________________ of data should be written after the diagram or table, perhaps following a more basic description.

6. Any _______________ assumptions ______________________ made in researching or writing the paper should be written near the beginning of a paper.

7. Don’t confuse a summary and a _______________ conclusion ____________________.

8. Don’t confuse magazines and academic (usually meaning peer-reviewed) ____________ journals ______________ – New Scientist and National Geographic, to give two examples, aren’t good models for your own academic writing.

9. Email approaches to academics who you have no connection to should be polite but state the reason for ________ contacting ___________ quite near the beginning of the email.

10. __________ Emphasising ______________ your ideas while also sounding sufficiently academic can be difficult.

11. If you ______________ alter ______________ a quote (to make it understandable out of context or to shorten it), any changes should be marked with “…” and “[ ]”.

12. If you want to ______________ advocate ______________ a particular government policy, that should usually be left until the final conclusion.

13. __________ Inaccurate ______________________________ grammar and information in citations can be marked with the expression “[sic]” in square brackets.

14. __________ Inadequate ______________________________ supporting evidence is the most common reason for rejecting academic papers, with being too similar to other research being the second most common cause for having a paper turned down.

15. It can be difficult to make your language sufficiently academic and diplomatic without making the meaning __________ ambiguous ___________.

16. It’s sometimes worth pasting things into an email rather than including an ______________ attachment ___________________, as it saves formatting problems and being blocked by people’s spam filters.

17. It’s worth mentioning when sources are particularly _______ authoritative ______ and so should be taken more seriously.

18. Most publishers automatically ______________ grant ______________ permission to quote from their publications, but it can be difficult and time consuming to get in contact with the right person.

19. Nowadays, you will probably need ________ consent ______________ to use long or many extracts from a single publication. However, it’s not always obvious who to write to in order to get such permission.
20. Only very long papers need _______ chapters ______________________________ – shorter ones should be just be divided into sections.

21. Perhaps the most important factors to make sure that your paper has an _______ impact __________________ are its title and where it is published, with publishing the right ideas and the right time (matching the zeitgeist) also being important.

22. Phrasal verbs and other idioms are generally not _______ appropriate ___________________ in academic writing, unless there is no other way of saying something.

23. Professors obviously won’t correct the grammar in your essays, but it can be worth asking for extra feedback on your _______ assignment __________________.

24. Some people believe it is impossible to avoid _______ bias _______ in academic writing, so you should disclose all information which could affect your judgement.

25. Some publications demand an _______ abstract ______________ summarizing the content of your paper, perhaps to be used on the index page of their website.

26. Some publications have their own _______ guidelines ______________________ on how to write for them, although some also refer you to style manuals such as the APA or The Chicago Manual of Style.

27. Starting a new paragraph is never _______ arbitrary _ – it is usually due to changing topic (in some way), but also can be because the paragraph has gone on too long.

28. The ______________ aid/ assistance __________________________ of a proof-reader doesn’t usually need to be mentioned in your paper.

29. The __________ format _____________ that online editors want can vary, including .doc (rather than more recent versions), .txt, or just the text pasted into an email.

30. The main thing to decide before starting to write an academic paper is your ______________ goals/ objectives ______________________, in other words what you want to achieve by publishing that information in that way.

31. The most important thing is to ______________ ensure ______________________ that your ideas can be understood.

32. The punctuation etc of an academic paper may have to be ______________ adjusted ___________________ to meet the requirements of a particular publication.

33. When style guides ______________ contradict _______ each other it is usually best to follow the APA’s advice, unless the guidelines from the publication state otherwise.

34. Word limits are rarely ______________ approximate ______________________, so you should stick to them exactly.

35. You can sometimes include ______________ acknowledgement __________________ of help with your research and/ or paper such as a list of people who you want to thank.

36. You must ______________ acknowledge ______________________ where your ideas come from, even if you aren’t directly quoting someone.

37. You need to be ______________ consistent _______________________ with use of not of “I”, American or British English, referencing conventions, etc.

38. You need to ______________ differentiate _______________________ between direct quotes and paraphrases of people’s ideas.

39. You need to use ______________ diverse ______________________ sources, for example not using the same dictionary for definitions throughout.

40. You should show an _______ awareness ______________ of the limits of your research and the ability to come to conclusion based on it, for example in a section on this topic.

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