Academic writing: using the TIME model

Student & Library Services
Take TIME to write your assignment

• Writing an assignment takes time, more time than you may expect. Just because you find yourself spending many weeks on an assignment doesn’t mean that you’re approaching it in the wrong way.

• It also takes time to develop the skills to write well, so don’t be discouraged if your early marks aren’t what you’d hoped for. Use the feedback from your previous assignments to improve.

• Different types of assignments require different styles, so be prepared for the need to continue to develop your skills.

• TIME is broken down into 4 key elements of academic writing: Targeted, In-depth, Measured and Evidence-based.

• For more information on Evidence-based, see guides for referencing and critical thinking
The TIME Model

🎯 TARGETED
Your assignment should be focused on the questions and criteria, make a decision and follow an argument.

🎯 IN-DEPTH
You should consider your topics thoroughly, thinking about all possible aspects, and including the argument for and against different viewpoints.

🎯 MEASURED
Your work needs to be cautious, emotionally neutral and formal – written in the third person and in full sentences.

🎯 EVIDENCE-BASED
You should reference all the ideas in your work, and apply critical thinking to your evidence.
Look for clue words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyse</th>
<th>Pick out the key points of a topic. Consider those key points in depth, including how they relate to each other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Look at the similarities and differences between two aspects. Say if any are more important than others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Give a detailed explanation of a topic of issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Write about both sides of a topic in depth, pointing out advantages and disadvantages. Come to a conclusion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Make it clear how and why something happens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Point out what a topic covers.</td>
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See the handout at [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/ld.php?content_id=14149964](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/ld.php?content_id=14149964)
Follows an argument

• you should provide a well-reasoned argument with each point following logically from another (logical order)
• Put forward a case

Makes a decision

• you need to show what your opinion is or which theory or model you think is the best, based on the evidence

• Concentrate on understanding what is required of you
  • Everything you write should be adding to your argument
Based on research

In order to write, you need to read and understand the research by:

- understanding the culture of your subject—it will use specialist language and referencing.
- becoming familiar with journal articles and papers in your discipline for style and vocabulary. You may need to build up to highly specialist articles
- finding good quality material which supports your case – you need evidence / examples

Compares and contrasts

- You will often have to compare and contrast things like theories, models or research findings.
- You would normally evaluate several, weighing them up against each other. Good to show differing opinions
Set structure

Aware of complexities

- There is likely to be a set structure and/or style for your discipline – check the assignment criteria. This can change depending on the type of assignment, e.g. an essay will be different to a report.
- All academic writing requires you to group similar points together in one paragraph or section.
- You need to show that there may not be clear-cut answers (It is very rare that there is a clear cut answer).
- You need to acknowledge that there could be weaknesses in the research you find. Even strong cases could have some weaknesses, e.g. a small sample size.
Features of an academic writing style:

| Cautious                                                                 | Don’t make generalisations or express absolute certainty, even though you’ve made a decision (targeted)  
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t be overly confident. Instead use phrases such as “The evidence seems to suggest .....”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotionally neutral</td>
<td>Stand back and analyse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be as objective as possible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Base your argument on research and evidence rather than appealing to the emotions of the reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Features of an academic writing style:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td>Usually written in the third person, except when talking about your own views (reflective writing) e.g. ‘This essay will argue’, not ‘I will argue’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No slang</strong></td>
<td>Don’t use contractions e.g. couldn’t, or use slang</td>
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| **Write to express, not to impress**  | Does it make sense to you?  
Is it easy to read?  
Too rambling? Too many clauses?  
Break up your writing into shorter sentences |
Unsuitable language for academic writing


TUBBY calorie-watchers may be able to shed the pounds quicker if they stick to food that's high on WHIFF. Sense scientists have found that the more pungent a plate of chow, the sooner we feel full. And the discovery has raised hopes that ODOUR ADDITIVES in our dinners could help to win the war against obesity. Dutch boffins have already shown that the texture of food affects how much people consume, with "thick" tasting spuds a top hunger-beater. They tested their latest theory by feeding volunteers custard slices while pumping out different smells - and found bite-sizes got smaller when the tasty dessert was served with a waft of fish, cheese or garlic.

The study, by Food & Biobased Research at Wageningen University, showed that downing modest mouthfuls actually satisfies the appetite quicker. It's also claimed stronger aromas might fool the brain into thinking the food is richer and higher in calories. By tinkering with smells in our food, report author Dr Rene de Wijk reckons it should be possible to cut portion sizes down by as much as a tenth. He said: "It could be that with a more intense odour we take instinctively smaller bites to avoid strong sensations. "Our concentrations were very low, hardly detectable, so the effect is quite subtle."
What else was missing from the article?

• If it was a piece of academic writing it would normally have the following:
  • citation details for where the information came from
  • references
  • research methodology – how many participants; how they carried it out.

• To see how the same research is written up in a more academic way, see: de Wijk, R. et al. (2012) ‘Food aroma affects bite size’, Flavour, 1(3), pp. 1-6.
Academic Phrasebank

• Website which gives ways of beginning sentences in an academic way
• Covers different parts of assignments e.g. introductions, conclusions, referring to literature etc.
• http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk
Resources


