

Introducing the course

In this course, how are the terms *Academic English* and *Scientific English* used?

In terms of this course, *academic English* means any English used in formal texts and presentations by students, researchers and teaching staff of any discipline. *Scientific English* is a subset of **academic English**, and is the English used by those studying scientific subjects (e.g. chemistry, biology, engineering, mathematics) rather than humanistic subjects such as history or philosophy. In any case, there is no clear distinction and even humanist subjects can be very 'scientific', e.g. the Philosophy of Biology.

1-What is *Academic English*?

It's crucial to understand that there isn't just one type of academic English. It differs massively depending on whether the author is studying **humanities** (often longwinded, abstract and full of jargon) or one of the **pure sciences** (very technical but potentially clear and concrete).

The style also differs massively from writer to writer. Some native and non- natives authors alike write very well (clear and well structured), and others very badly (murky and badly organized).

It is dangerous to talk of 'academic English' as if it were a homogeneous style. You should be wary of teaching books and students books that present academic English as if it were a style that all academics use and as if it always has certain characteristics such as:

- use of passive voice
- use of abstract nouns
- long sentences
- use of Latinate rather than Anglo-Saxon vocabulary

In summary: academic English varies massively, there is no single definition of what it is.

Are the rules of Academic English the same for all disciplines?

Unfortunately not. Students need to download the 'instructions to authors' from the journal's website to see what their specific journal requires. The format of the paper (particularly the Abstract) varies from discipline to discipline and journal to journal. Even the order of the sections differs considerably. The use of **we** vs **the passive form** also varies, and some journals even allow the first person singular.

Is the grammar of Academic English different from that of General English?

The grammar of academic English is sometimes non-standard, particularly in the sciences, but not normally in the humanities. For example, the use of the genitive, the definite article and the use of numbers.

Does Academic / Scientific English share any similarities with Business English?

Good writing whether academic or **business** should be **clear** and **easy to understand**. However, in the world of academia, **Latinate words** tend to be more precise and scientific than **Anglo-Saxon words** and should thus be preferred.

Businesses have a **product to sell** ; so do academics - **their findings**. By using shorter paragraphs, shorter sentences and language that draws the reader's attention to the importance of what the researcher has found. So, just as business language tends to be full of action verbs, academic speaking and to a lesser extent writing should try to choose verbs where possible.

Businesses tend to use shorter sentences in their communication with the public. Academics tend to use very long sentences. But this doesn't mean that academics are right to do so; it simply reflects the way they have been writing for centuries.

Moral of the story: Your job is to get your work published.