

Writing Feedback

Glossary

A glossary of academic writing terms to help you understand your feedback.

Term	Explanation	Example
abbreviation	A shortened form of a word or phrase	uni; lab
abstract noun	A noun that describes a state of being, quality or feeling	freedom; democracy
academic integrity	Being honest and fair when conducting academic work by acknowledging all sources with correct referencing	All students at university need to behave with academic integrity.
academic text	A textbook or journal that has been reviewed by academic peers	Students should use recently published academic texts for their assignments.
acronym	An abbreviation formed using the initial letter of the words in a phrase or sentence	WHO for World Health Organisation
active voice	The subject of the verb does the action	He drinks coffee.
adjective	A word that describes a noun	big; expensive
adverb	A word that describes a verb or an adjective	well; quickly; patiently
alliteration	The repetition of initial sounds in neighbouring words	The snake slid slowly through the grass.
allusion	A reference to a place, event, literary work or work of art either directly or indirectly to help the reader make associations	He was a Romeo in her eyes.
American English	The American spelling for a word	color; organization; traveling
annotated bibliography	A list of citations with an accompanying summary and evaluation of each source	The annotated bibliography was helpful in selecting the best sources for the major essay.
apostrophe	Punctuation used to indicate either missing words or possession	don't; the girl's dress; the brothers' bicycles
argumentative essay	An essay which presents an argument on an issue or proposition	Argumentative essays are the most popular type of essay in Law.
article	A word that introduces a noun	a; an; the
assertion	A type of argument; a confident and forceful belief	The author's assertion in relation to the scientific evidence was disputed.
assessment criteria	The elements or features on which an evaluation of a text is based	Assessment criteria often include task completion, content sources, and accuracy.
audience	The reader or viewer to which a text is targeted	A writer should always keep the intended audience in mind.
Australian English	The Australian spelling for a word (the same as British English)	colour; organisation; travelling
background information	Information that provides the reader with a history of the issue or problem	Background information to the topic should be included in the introduction.
bibliography	A list of all the references read or viewed when preparing a work, but not all cited in the work	In general, assignments at university require a reference list, not a bibliography.

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body paragraph	A paragraph located in the main part of a paper that supports the thesis or aim	A body paragraph contains a topic sentence, supporting sentences with evidence and can include a concluding statement.
British English	The British spelling for a word (the same as Australian English)	colour; organisation; travelling
capitalisation	The process of using a capital letter to signify the start of a sentence, proper nouns and acronyms	He drinks coffee; James Davies; WHO
choppy sentence	Choppy sentences occur when there are too many short or simple sentences in a row	Choppy sentences make your writing sound disjointed and unsophisticated.
citation	When you add information from another individual's work into your work	In-text citations must be used throughout your research paper.
claim	A type of argument; a statement that has no evidence to support it	He claimed his idea was stolen even though he had no proof.
clause	A part of a sentence that contains a verb	as it is necessary
cliche	Words and phrases that are so overused that they lose their effectiveness	Avoid cliches such as 'going forward' in academic writing.
cohesion	The process of organising and linking ideas in your writing	Paragraphs must have unity and cohesion in order to be effective.
collective noun	Words used to describe a collection	team; group; flock
collocation	Words that often go together, such as 'communication style'. The words 'communication format' do not usually go together, so they do not collocate.	time management; make an investment
colloquial language	Language that is conversational	see you later; that's really cool
colon	Punctuation used to indicate the expansion of an idea or the beginning of a list	Bring several items: boots, a jumper and an overcoat.
comma	Punctuation used to separate key parts of a sentence including phrases and clauses, as well as items in a list.	Although he studied hard, he failed the test. Success in study requires commitment, effort, and time.
comma splice	Using a comma between two independent clauses instead of a full stop or linking word	A comma splice can be corrected by joining the sentences with a full-stop, semicolon or conjunction.
common noun	The names of everyday objects that can be seen, heard, smelled or touched	phone; song; flower; keyboard
communication strategies	The various methods of communication	written; spoken; visual; oral
complex sentence	A sentence containing a dependent and an independent clause	If a student has advanced writing skills, the essay produced is likely to be well-structured and error-free.
compound sentence	A sentence containing two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction	Students need highly developed written communication skills, and they also need good research skills.
concise	Succinct; brief	An email should be clear and concise.
concluding sentence	The final sentence of a body paragraph that sums up the main idea	The concluding sentence reinforces the main point of the paragraph.
conclusion	The final section of a written assignment or presentation, whereby the main idea is reinforced, main ideas are summarised and a final comment provided	The conclusion is an essential component of an effective essay because it restates the main ideas.
concrete language	Language that provides specific details so a concept can be identified or observed clearly	An effective leader, such as Bill Gates, has a vision to eradicate poverty.
conjunction	A word that joins two words, phrases or parts of a sentence together	however; because; while

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continuous tense	A tense that expresses an activity that continues over a period of time	he was working; he is working; he will be working
contraction	Two words that become joined for informal or spoken language	shouldn't; we're; it's
controlling idea	The part of a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph	The controlling idea is the main concept that will be written about in a paragraph.
countable noun	A noun that can have a plural form	One book; two books
dash	Punctuation that is used to emphasise a point, or, like brackets, to set off a disconnected expression or element	Three students - John, Sarah and Ethan - received an award.
defining relative clause	A clause that contains essential information necessary to describe a noun. No commas are used before and after the relative clause	The man who was wearing the black jacket stole the wallet.
definite article	The ' used with some nouns to show certainty	The research that was conducted this year
definition	The meaning of a word	Definitions can be found in a dictionary.
dependent clause	A clause that cannot stand on its own	Because of the virus
descriptive essay	An essay that describes a situation, person or experience	The students were asked to write a descriptive essay about the camp.
direct quote	The words that are directly spoken or taken from a source	Use a direct quote as evidence of the style used by the writer.
discussion	The process of highlighting various aspects of a topic	The discussion about how to address the crisis was controversial.
draft	An incomplete version of a text which is usually the first version of a written assessment or report	Academic staff often provide feedback on a draft essay.
editing	Checking written work for structure, the logical flow of ideas and task completion	Editing an assignment is necessary prior to submission.
ellipsis	A set of three dots (...) used to indicate missing words that are unnecessary	Martin Luther King stated, "I say to you today, my friends... I still have a dream."
end text reference	A reference placed at the end of an assignment for a work cited in the assignment that includes all bibliographical details of the source	The end text reference must correspond to the in text reference in the body of the paper.
exclamation mark	punctuation used at the end of a word or sentence to indicate emphasis or strong feelings	Enter at your own risk!
executive summary	Also known as the 'abstract'. Provides a summary or overview of the entire report or journal article	The executive summary is useful for a time-poor reader.
figure of speech	A word or phrase used not for its literal meaning but for a desired effect	Shakespeare is famous for his use of alliteration, metaphors and other figures of speech.
final essay statement	The last sentence in the conclusion of the essay	You should end with a strong final essay statement.
findings	The results of an investigation	The findings indicated that the pollution levels had increased by 10%.
formal tone	Writing that uses formal vocabulary and a detached and precise style	It is evident that students can benefit significantly from having accurate and concise communication when working on assignments and other important tasks.
full stop	Punctuation that ends a regular sentence. In American English known as a 'period'	The population is expected to increase by 3% over the next year.
future tense	A tense that expresses an idea that occurs in a future period from now	In September there will be an election.

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general statement	A sentence that makes a general comment about a topic located at the beginning of the introduction	That playing video games has become a popular pastime is a general statement.
generalisation	A statement based on an inference derived from most cases but which may not be true for all cases	That all men are unemotional is a generalisation.
gerund	An -ing noun that looks like a verb	Listening to music
heading	A title or brief description for a section of a paper	A heading should be concise yet informative.
hyperbole	The use of exaggeration to evoke strong feelings or to provide emphasis or effect	There will never be a moment like this.
hyphen	Punctuation used to join two existing words, in order to create a third meaning	role-play
idiom	A phrase with a special meaning	Give it your best shot.
in-text reference	An acknowledgement of the source of an idea placed within the body of your work	An in-text reference usually includes the author's surname and the year of publication of the work.
indefinite article	A word used with some nouns to indicate one of something	a; an
independent clause	A clause that expresses a complete thought and can stand on its own	The students enjoyed the lesson.
informal tone	A general style of language used for everyday events and narrative writing	It's a wonderful time to be alive.
interpretation	The way something has been understood; the meaning derived	A poem may have several different interpretations.
introduction	The opening section of a piece of writing or presentation that introduces the topic and the aim	The introduction needs to engage the reader or audience.
introductory phrase	Similar to an opening statement, the phrase at the beginning of a text that engages the reader's attention	A strong introductory phrase will give the reader a clear sense of the text that will follow.
inverted commas	Also known as quotation marks. They are placed around a quotation or dialogue	Martin Luther King stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
irony	Irony is a figure of speech where there is a contradiction between what is said and what is really meant	I left a message on social media that you should not use social media.
irregular	Grammar that does not follow normal rules, especially used to describe for verb forms	He is a member of the family.
juxtaposition	When two or more ideas, places, characters and their actions are placed side by side for the purpose of comparison and contrast	The giant and the little person walked hand in hand.
margin	The area between the edge of a page and the content	The size of the margin can be adjusted in a Word document.
marking rubric	A document indicating assessment criteria and descriptors of the various levels of achievement	A marking rubric provides a clear insight into how an assessment will be marked.
metaphor	A comparison stating something is or was something else	The road was a ribbon of moonlight.
missing word/s	Words omitted from a text	The student has some missing words which affected the clarity of the argument.
modal verb	A verb that tells a mood or opinion	would; should; must
narrative plot	The order and structure of events in a story	A typical narrative starts with a beginning that establishes the main characters, a middle that builds rising tension, a climax that brings the action to a head and a resolution that provides closure.

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narrative writing	Writing intended to tell a story	A fictional short story is a form of narrative writing.
negative	A sentence that uses 'not'	He isn't hungry
nominalisation	The process of changing word form, usually from a verb to a noun, to nouns in order to make a text sound more academic	Nominalisation changes the verb 'require' to the noun 'requirement'
non-academic text	A text that has not been referenced or peer-reviewed	A magazine is a non-academic text.
non-defining relative clause	A clause that contains non-essential or extra information about a noun	Shakespeare, who was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, wrote many plays and sonnets.
noun	A word that names a person, place or thing	contract; building
noun phrase	A group of words that act as a noun	The top of the building
object	A noun or pronoun that follows a verb	In the sentence 'David takes the train', the train is the object.
onomatopoeia	The use of a word that sounds like the sound it is describing	Smash; bang; creak
opening statement	The first statement in a persuasive speech or argument	The opening statement should attract the attention of the audience.
opinion essay	An essay of which the main purpose is to provide an opinion on an issue	The opinion essay made some useful observations about the use of pesticides in agriculture.
Oxford comma	The use of a comma before 'and' or 'or' in a list of at least three items	This is because the ability to write with accuracy, cohesion, and clarity is an important component of assessment tasks.
oxymoron	Two words used together that have opposite meanings	tough love; cruel kindness
parallel language	Language that has the same grammatical structure	Recommendations should be written using parallel language.
paraphrase	Expressing someone else's idea using your own words	Academic assignments mainly consist of paraphrases of ideas from research.
parenthesis	Another term for brackets. Used to set off disconnected expressions or elements that could be omitted.	Some companies (such as EDC Corporation) offer employees bonuses.
part of speech	A type of word	noun; verb; adjective; adverb; preposition; pronoun; conjunction
participle	A verb form that can be used as an adjective, a noun, to create a verb tense, or to create the passive voice	The finished product; He has finished his assignment.
passive voice	When the subject of the sentence is affected by the action	The bike was made last year.
past tense	A tense that expresses an idea that occurred in the past and is now complete	He completed his assignment yesterday.
perfect tense	A tense with have + past participle of the verb	Michael has been to London. By next year he will have travelled to Tokyo.
personal title	Titles associated with a person's name	Mr, Mrs, Dr
personification	Giving human-like qualities to an inanimate object	The wind screamed through the forest.
persuasive device	A technique used to persuade the audience	Rhetorical question; expert opinion; repetition
persuasive writing	Writing which is intended to persuade an audience of a particular point of view	An argumentative essay is an example of a persuasive text.
phrasal verb	A phrase that connects a verb with a preposition	look into; sum up; start off with
phrase	A small group of words that make sense together and form part of a sentence. Phrases may be noun phrases, verb phrases, or participle phrases.	the young man; walked along the road; listening to music

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plagiarism	Failure to acknowledge another person's ideas or work	Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct.
plural form	Two or more of something	pens; people
point of view	The perspective or lens through which a text is written	First person (I); second person (you); third person (he/she/it)
premise	An idea or fact that provides reasons to support a conclusion	That mobile phones should be banned at school is based on the premise that there will be fewer distractions for students.
preposition	A word that shows a relationship between nouns	in; from; at; on; for; over
present tense	A tense that expresses an idea that occurs at the current time or always	I eat sandwiches for lunch; I am eating a sandwich at the moment.
pronoun	A word that indicates someone	I; you; he; she; it; we; they; my; your; us
proof	The supporting evidence for a fact or argument	There is proof that smoking causes lung cancer.
proofreading	The process of checking and correcting a piece of work for errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar	Proofreading will improve the readability of your assignment.
proper noun	Name of an organisation, person or place and spelled with an initial capital letter	Alex Smith; New York
punctuation	Marks used to separate elements in a sentence and to convey meaning	comma; full stop; apostrophe; colon; semi-colon; question mark; exclamation mark
question mark	Punctuation at the end of a sentence that denotes a question	How many students have been affected?
reference list	A list of end text references found at the end of a major essay or report, sometimes referred to as a bibliography	A reference list is required for most university essays and reports.
referencing	The process of acknowledging the sources of information used in a piece of work	There are many different referencing styles, including APA, Chicago and Harvard.
referencing guide	A guide to referencing conventions and techniques	The referencing guide can usually be found on the library website.
referencing style	A method of referencing with specific conventions	Common referencing styles include APA, Chicago, Harvard, MLA and Vancouver.
reflection	Looking back and evaluating an event or experience	Students were asked to write a reflection about their learning experience.
register	Refers to the style or tone used when speaking or writing	Formal register: The business engaged a consultant - Informal register: The business took on a consultant.
regular	Grammar that follows normal rules, especially used to describe for verb forms	It takes time to understand.
relative clause	A clause that gives information about people, places, things, possessions and time	A photographer is a person who takes photos.
repetition	Saying or doing something again, usually for emphasis	Repetition is a persuasive technique.
report	A document which identifies and examines issues, events, or findings of an investigation	The manager presented his sales report to the team.
report recommendations	Specific actions to address the issues identified in the report	The report recommendations were taken on board by the organisation.
reporting verb	A verb that shows the intention of the writer or speaker	states, describes, explains

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salutation	A greeting used in a letter that may be formal or informal	In a business letter, the salutation should be formal.
scholarly journal article	A journal article that has been referenced and peer reviewed	The best source of information for a research essay is a scholarly journal article.
scientific writing	Technical writing to communicate scientific topics	Scientific writing is factual, precise and objective.
semicolon	Punctuation used to link independent clauses that are closely related, to separate items in a list if any of the items contain commas and before connector words such as 'however'	Some directors want to outsource training; other Directors want to conduct training in-house.
sentence fragment	An incomplete sentence	Professional staff also need to develop
sentence fragment	An incomplete sentence	When the risk decreases' is not a complete sentence
signposting language	Language used to signal the relationship between ideas	Signposting language such as 'however' and 'previously' help readers to follow an argument.
simile	A comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as'	As white as snow; He rode like the wind.
simple sentence	A sentence with one independent clause or main idea	The art of negotiation is an important skill.
singular form	Only one of something	book; pen
source material	The materials (books, journals, websites) that have been used to gain ideas for a piece of work	The source materials for a research report should be saved in a folder.
spacing	The amount of space between lines of text	Line spacing options can be selected under the Paragraph tab in Word.
student voice	The personal style of the student writer	In academic writing, it is important to develop your own student voice.
subheading	A heading which is subordinate to the main heading and expresses a supporting idea	Reports use headings and subheadings to identify different sections.
subject	A noun or pronoun before a verb	The student participated well.
subject verb agreement	When the subject agrees or conjugates with the verb form	The analysis shows...
summary	A concise expression of the main idea/s of a text	The review provided a summary of the plot of the film.
symbol	An object or person or other element used to represent an idea	red for love; cross for death
synthesise	Combining ideas from a range of sources to explain and idea	A literature review needs to synthesise ideas on one theme.
tense	A verb form that shows the time	present simple; past continuous, future perfect
thesis	The writer's main argument or position in an essay	The thesis is important because the whole essay 'hangs' on this idea.
thesis statement	The sentence which expresses the main idea or stance of the writer in an essay	The thesis statement is usually the last sentence of the introduction.
topic sentence	Contains the subject and the controlling idea of a paragraph	The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph.
transition marker	A word or phrase between sentences or paragraphs that indicate the relationship between these elements	Transition markers such as 'furthermore', 'however', 'apart from this', give the reader an idea of what idea is coming next in a piece of writing.
uncountable	A noun that has no plural form	information; water

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understatement	Saying something is less important than it is in reality.	"It's rather warm today" when the temperature is 42 degrees celsius.
verb	An action word, something a person 'does'	show; make; resolve
wordy	A piece of writing that contains too much information or unnecessary words	Wordy writing often confuses readers because sentences are too long and the main idea is hard to understand.
writing format	The layout conventions appropriate for a text including margins, spacing and font size	In academic writing, the referencing style will usually provide information about the correct writing format.
writing structure	The organisation of a text which usually depends on the type of text such as an essay or report	When planning a piece of academic writing, it is important to be clear on the writing structure before starting.