STYLE OF GRADUATE WRITING
I’m Emily Rose Cole, the Graduate Assistant to the Academic Writing Center (coleer@mail.uc.edu)

I’m a PhD candidate in the English and I’ve taught composition and creative writing for over seven years at the university level.

I’m here to assist you and develop presentations through AWC to meet your needs as grad students.

Don’t hesitate to reach out!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify</th>
<th>Identify key differences between academic writing and general audience writing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Examine how an academic tone is key to establishing expectations in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Discuss how to balance formality and clarity in academic writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Compare simple and complex sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discover</td>
<td>Discover how order of information is important to coherent writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider</td>
<td>Consider how transitional phrases can help orient a reader to the flow of ideas in a text.</td>
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</tbody>
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## What's the Difference Between Effective Graduate Writing and Effective Undergraduate Writing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Level Expectations</th>
<th>Graduate Level Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Clear, engaging, stylistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis based on points covered in class, not necessarily new ideas</td>
<td>Incorporates information from class and proposes out new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies primarily on transition phrases</td>
<td>Transitions seamlessly between points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written for general audience/teacher</td>
<td>Written for a professional audience of experts in a specific field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows prescribed structure</td>
<td>Structure determined by content and field expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted tone</td>
<td>Confident, articulate, and clear voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets minimum citation requirements</td>
<td>Incorporates thorough research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“There is a massive gap between what most readers consider to be good writing and what academics typically produce and publish.”

—Helen Sword
UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCE

- Writing isn’t just about proper grammar and perfect sentences. To write well, you need to understand who you’re talking to.

- **How** we convey written information depends on the writer’s audience.

- A scientist might write about an experiment’s findings in an academic article or in a tweet, but the way that information is conveyed will be different based on the medium and the audience.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC WRITING

- Clear and concise
- Transitions seamlessly between points
- Written for a professional audience
- Flows logically
- Structure determined by content and field expectations
- Incorporates thorough research
- Uses proper grammar
- Includes accurate citations of credible sources
AUDIENCE AWARENESS: UNDERSTANDING TONE

- **Tone** refers to the word choice, sentence structure, and punctuation used to convey the attitude of a writer toward their audience.

- Think of tone like the written equivalent of verbal inflection:
  - In speech, one word can convey several different meanings based on how the word is said.
  - In text, tone is conveyed through written indicators such as punctuation, phrasing, word choice, and even (in some circumstances) emojis.
You receive the following text from your best friend. How is the tone different for each?

- Hey
- Hey!
- Hey.
- Heyyyyyyyyy
- Hey ❤
The subtle choices we make in texting or emailing affect how our audience interprets tone in our writing.

Similarly, our tone is affected by choices we make in academic writing, based on presentation of ideas, word choice, grammar, etc.

Ultimately, tone affects how an audience perceives our writing.

Thinking about the context of our writing in advance will help us understand the most appropriate tone to use for each written assignment.
Unlike most types of writing designed for the public, academic writing is highly specialized. This type of writing may include:

- Field-specific jargon
- Complex sentences
- Formulas, graphs, and charts
- Field-specific citation formats (APA, MLA, etc.)
- Field-specific ways of presenting or organizing information
CLARITY AND SIMPLICITY
# FORMALITY VS. CLARITY: A BALANCING ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formality</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informality can damage your credibility</td>
<td>Being too formal, too complex in your language, or too reliant on jargon can impede clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal tone can be conveyed through presentation, not just word choice</td>
<td>Remember that the goal of writing is to communicate ideas clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid slang</td>
<td>Impress your reader with your ideas, not an unnecessarily complex style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present the material according to guidelines outlined by your audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simple sentences are an asset

- Academic writing demands some jargon and sentence complexity, **but:**
  - Sentence variety is also important!
  - Too many complex sentences in a row create density in a text.
  - Sentence complexity can obscure meaning.
  - Reading too many complex sentences at once can have a lulling effect on the reader.
Don’t overlook the simple sentence!

A variety of sentence structures keep your writing lively and clear.

Remember, formality and clarity should be in balance.

It’s okay (and often better!) to use shorter sentences to break up longer ones and increase sentence variety.
Breaking Up Complex Sentences

When revising, pay attention to how many complex sentences you’re using in a row.

Breaking some of them up into simple sentences will make your writing clearer.

Complex sentence:

“Our findings suggest a practice-induced tradeoff in auditory processing, rather than a general improvement that benefits perceptual dimensions relevant for survival at the expense of those that are less relevant.”

Broken into smaller sentences:

“Our findings suggest that practice does not lead to a general improvement in auditory processing. Instead, practice leads to a bias that speeds up processing in some dimensions (e.g., pitch) only at the cost of delaying processing in other dimensions (e.g., loudness).”
In the context of writing studies, **coherence** refers to the logical bridge between ideas in a sentence.

Coherence is sometimes called “flow.” In this guise, it has a mysterious, almost mystical quality.

Coherent statements are built out of units of information presented with old information before new information.

If you’ve ever puzzled over a sentence or a paragraph because the text didn’t “flow,” it was probably a coherence issue.
IN OTHER WORDS..

- Order of information matters in your sentences!
- Start with old information and end with new information.
- Finish one thought before starting the next.
- Think about your audience.

Old ➔ New = Coherence
CONSISTENT CONSTRUCTIONS & TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

- Transition words help guide your reader from sentence to sentence, and paragraph to paragraph.

- Examples: furthermore, whereas, moreover, finally, however, similarly, in contrast, subsequently

- Substitute concise transitions for wordy phrases
  - due to the fact that ➔ “since” or “because”
  - despite the fact that ➔ “although” or “even though”
Transitional phrases (sometimes called “signal phrases”) help a reader navigate from thought to thought.

They’re great signposts both for readers and for writers! They help you (and your reader) anticipate the structure of a sentence.

Make sure you vary your signal phrases! Using the same construction over and over again (for example, “According to,” “[Author] says” etc.) can make your writing repetitive and less easy to navigate.
## TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Premise Indicators</th>
<th>Common Conclusion Indicators</th>
<th>Signal Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>Advances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>Thus</td>
<td>Asserts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Argues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows from</td>
<td>It follows that</td>
<td>Points out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As shown by</td>
<td>Then</td>
<td>Highlights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggests</td>
<td>Accordingly</td>
<td>Theorizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrates</td>
<td>In conclusion</td>
<td>Admits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consistent sentence constructions let your reader know what to expect.

Consistency gives a reader a grounded sense of what information will be presented when.

“In this essay I will address issues A, B, and C…” and then you address those issues in the stated order.”

“Our first hypothesis was proven” and then subsequent paragraphs begin the same way, e.g. “Our second hypothesis was not proven.”
Example One: Incoherent

The basis of our American democracy—equal opportunity for all—is being threatened by college costs that have been rising for the last several years. Increases in family income have been significantly outpaced by increases in tuition at our collects and universities during that period. Only the children of the wealthiest families in our society will be able to afford a college education if this trend continues. Knowledge and intellectual skills, in addition to wealth, will divide us as a people, when that happens. Equal opportunity and the egalitarian basis of our democratic society could be eroded by such a divide.

Example Two: Coherent

In the last several years, college costs have been rising so fast that they are now threatening the basis for our American democracy—equal opportunity for all. During that period, tuition has significantly outpaced increases in family income. If this trend continues, a college education will soon be affordable only by the children of the wealthiest families in our society. When that happens, we will be divided as a people not only by wealth, but by knowledge an intellectual skills. Such a divide will erode equal opportunity and the egalitarian basis of our democratic society.
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If you’re unsure if a paragraph is coherent, use the color-coding technique to double check.

Train yourself to recognize coherence when reading. Pay attention to how writers shift from thought to thought.

Remember that simple sentences enhance your writing. If you have several complex sentences in a row, break one of them up into simple sentences to reduce the “lulling effect” on your reader.
“Chopin never totally mastered the art of orchestration. In fact, beyond the age of 21 he never wrote for the orchestra. The relative unimportance of the orchestra in his concertos is proven by the fact that he once played the F Minor Concerto as a piano solo, to good effect. Hector Berlioz, who was very sensitive to the use of the orchestra and who never himself wrote a true concerto, had harsh words for the accompaniment in Chopin concertos. He commented . . .”
Old information comes before new information, and similar ideas are grouped together:

“Chopin never totally mastered the art of orchestration. In fact, beyond the age of 21 he never wrote for the orchestra. The relative unimportance of the orchestra in his concertos is proven by the fact that he once played the F Minor Concerto as a piano solo, to good effect. Hector Berlioz, who was very sensitive to the use of the orchestra and who never himself wrote a true concerto, had harsh words for the accompaniment in Chopin concertos. He commented . . .”
Improving Coherence

- Limit yourself to one or two ideas per sentence, especially when presenting complex ideas.
- Start with familiar information to orient your audience, then proceed to the new information.
- Use transitional phrases and consistent sentence constructions to guide your reader.
CONCLUSION
Academic tone may include scientific jargon, field-specific ways of organizing information, and use of complex sentence structures.

Effective academic writing requires a balance of formality and clarity.

Sentence complexity alone doesn’t make good writing. In fact, simple sentences keep your writing varied and clear.
CONCLUSION II

Keep your writing coherent by paying attention to the logical flow between ideas within your writing.

Present old information before new information and group similar ideas together.

As much as possible, limit yourself to 1 – 2 ideas per sentence.

Use transitional phrases to show relationships between ideas.
The Academic Writing Center is here to help you! We have tutors available, helpful handouts, other resources available from our website, Visit our website at uc.edu/awc. All our resources are online this year.

Individual tutoring isn’t just for undergrads! There are graduate tutors who are excited to help you work through any of your writing assignments. Sign up using the “schedule an appointment” tab on the website.

We thank you for attending our first AWC Graduate Workshop. The schedule for the seven other workshops this semester is posted at: www.uc.edu/learningcommons/writingcenter/grad.html
Are there questions you have that weren’t covered by this presentation so far? Now’s the time to ask!

Please unmute and ask questions aloud if possible, since multiple questions in chat are hard for me to follow.
SUNY Plattsburgh List of Transition Phrases

Research from the University of Cincinnati’s Academic Writing Center and the Purdue Online Writing Lab

Strunk & White: The Elements of Style 4th Edition