



Clear communication and proof reading: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/0zme7uKq>

Transcript

Introduction: Welcome to this tutorial on clear communication and proof reading from the University of Reading Study Advice team. The tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace and you can pause it at any time.

Overview: This tutorial will look at 3 main areas: academic writing style, how to edit your work and effective proof reading. All essential skills in ensuring your work communicates your ideas in the most effective way.

Academic style: There are many myths surrounding the mystery of academic writing. Contrary to popular belief your work does not need use long complicated words, sounding like you have swallowed a thesaurus, in order to be considered as 'good academic writing'. It is much more about writing in a clear, objective style in order to communicate your ideas effectively.

Take a look at these 2 writing examples. This first one may at first sound very authoritative, using long complicated words but for many it is not that easy to understand and the ideas are getting somewhat lost as the reader tries to unpick the main message.

This second example makes the same point. Some of the longer words are removed but the message is much clearer to understand. Remember you are writing to express your ideas not impress your reader with your vocabulary.

Academic writing: Having said that there are some conventions to be aware of when writing an academic essay. Your writing, much like our character, should be formal and therefore should be distinctive from words used in speech.

Contractions such as can't won't shan't etc. shouldn't be used but instead write these words out in full. Generally the use of 'I' as in I believe, we or addressing the reader as you should be avoided, as this has the effect of your writing sounding more emotional and subjective. Try instead to write in the passive tense using phrases like "this essay will", "it could be argued that". Rather than simple statements like "Quite a large number of people believe", try and use specific numbers or percentages, etc.

Finally make sure that you use evidence to support your points and cite these correctly within your work.

For ideas on suitable academic phrases to use within your work. Click on this link to an academic phrasebank designed by Manchester University.

Slide 5 (Academic Writing - continued): In order to ensure you're communicating your ideas in a clear way, you will need to have a firm grasp of the various grammar and punctuation rules. Colons and semi colons for instance can help emphasise your points and show where ideas are linked together. If you need to brush up on your grammar and punctuation, click on the link, which will take you to pages from Bristol University, which offers explanation, examples and exercises to improve your writing skills.

Edit your work: Once you have completed your first draft it is important that you edit your work. There are a number of things that you should be looking out for at this stage in order to check that you have answered the question and structured your answer in the most effective way.

Firstly try highlighting the main point in each paragraph. If you're finding this difficult it may be that you have more than one point and therefore more than one paragraph should be used, or your point isn't written clearly enough.

Once you have done this, check that the point does in fact help to answer the set question and that it has evidence and examples to back up the point.

Check also the flow of your essay. Are the points in the most logical order? Are the most appropriate signposting words used (like however, an alternative view is offered by etc.) to help the reader follow the arguments?

Finally remember to check the introduction; are you covering what you said you were going to? And the conclusion. Have you in fact answered the question? Ensure both still make sense.

Proof reading: The final step, and again one that should not be overlooked, is proof reading. You can lose easy marks by not proof reading your work for errors, as not only can this make your work difficult to understand but also sloppy spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes can make the reader lose confidence in what you are trying to say.

You need to look carefully over each sentence and word within your work to spot for any errors or omissions. It helps if you leave time between editing your work and proof reading and if you print out your work and read it slowly out loud.

When proof reading your work look out for typos and general spelling mistakes and also where words are missed out (this can happen a lot)

Don't forget to check for grammar and punctuation mistakes. Read the work out loud and exaggerate commas with pauses and if there is no punctuation in a sentence try reading it without taking a breath. Often required commas are missing, which can change the readability of your work.

Finally look out for missing or incomplete references. Students often leave these to the last minute and time pressures mean they forget to check these at the end. Also check all your references appear in your bibliography.

In summary: So to recap, the steps involved in ensuring clear communication in your written work are:

Firstly write to express your ideas not impress the reader. You need to write in a clear objective style.

Leave time to edit your work, ensuring your points are still relevant and structured in the most effective way

And finally print out your work and read it out loud to check for errors with grammar, spelling and references.