

EEI2310

Academic Writing for Teachers of English

Academic Characteristics

- Formality
- Objectivity
- Evidence
- **Precision**
- Hedging
- Analytical writing



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Precision



Precision writing is a style of written communication whose primary objective is to convey information. The key characteristics of precision writing are **1) clarity and 2) conciseness** (University of Michigan, n.d.).

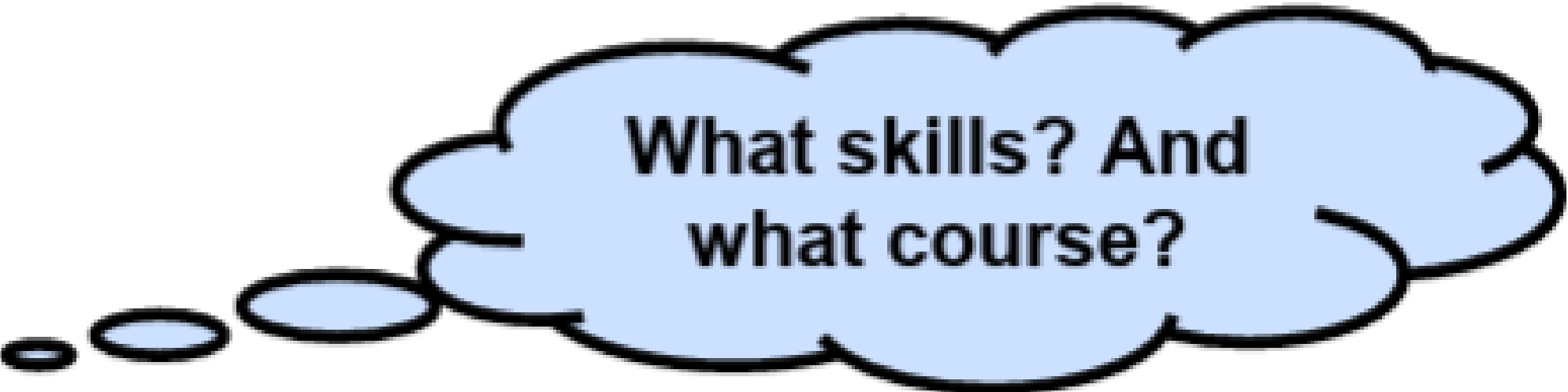
Source: University of Michigan

How to be precise



Specify what you mean: provide details, examples and explanations so your meaning is clear. **Avoid using vague descriptors** in your writing .

Vague sentence: *Alan used the skills learnt in the course to start a business.*



What skills? And
what course?

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)

How to be precise



Clear Sentence:

Alan used **the finance skills learnt in the Certificate IV course in Entrepreneurship** to start a business.

Vague sentence: *Alan used the skills learnt in the course to start a business.*

What skills? And
what course?

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)

Broad | Personal Opinions



Most people didn't like changing trains on the way to work, but they still thought it **was better than** taking a bus.

- How many people are “most”?
- How strong is their dislike of changing trains?
- In what way are trains are better than buses?



Source: University of Melbourne

Precision | Use Concrete Words.



Concrete words refer to **tangible, qualities** or **characteristics**, things we know through our senses. Words and phrases like "**102 degrees**," "**obese Siamese cat**," and "**deep spruce green**" are concrete.

Abstract

To excel in college, you'll have to **work hard**.

ISU Writing Center (2016)

Concrete

To excel in college, you'll need to do **go to every class; do all your reading before you go; write several drafts of each paper; and review your notes for each class weekly.**



How to be precise

Use appropriate technical language:

Discipline-specific terminology refers to the phrasing and technical words used within a discipline. This language can help you discuss, critique and build on complex ideas with more precision.

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)



How to be precise: Avoid Using Jargon

Thinking about your audience and their expectations will help you make decisions about word choice. Some writers think that academic audiences expect them to “sound smart” by using big or technical words. But the most important goal of academic writing is not to sound smart—it is to **communicate an argument** or information **clearly and convincingly**.

Jargon or technical terms that make readers work unnecessarily hard. Perhaps you need to use some of these words because they are important terms in your field, but don’t throw them in just to sound “smart.”

(Brandeis University, n.d.)



How to be precise: Avoid Using Jargon

- The **dialectical interface** between neo-Platonists and **anti-disestablishment Catholics** offers **an algorithm for deontological thought**.
- The **dialogue** between neo-Platonists and **certain Catholic thinkers** is a model for **deontological thought**.



(Brandeis University, n.d.)



How to be concise

Strategy 1: Replace wordy or empty phrases with **one-word alternatives**

Concise writing is succinct and to the point. Writing in this way allows your reader to understand you easily without **having to unpack too many words.**

Wordy phrases

at this point in time



Replacement

now

in the not too distant future



soon

is able to



can

in the final analysis



finally

in spite of the fact that



although

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)



How to be concise

Strategy 3:

Replace phrasal verbs with single-word verbs to make your writing more concise

Phrasal verbs are multi-word verbs (e.g. put forward, talk about) comprising a verb and an adverb and/or a preposition.

bring up



raise

look into



investigate

speed up



accelerate

deal with



address

go back



return

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)



Strategy3: Replace phrasal verb.

1. Cut off
2. Find out
3. Give up
4. Hand out
5. Let down
6. Pick out.

Distribute

Discontinue

Quit

Discover

Disappoint

Select

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.).



Strategy3: Replace phrasal verb.

1. Set up
2. Churn out
3. Put up with
4. Put together

Assemble

Establish

Tolerate

Produce

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.).

Strategy 3: Replace verbs with many possible meanings



Verbs with many possible meanings include **‘do’**, **‘make’**, **‘put’**, **‘keep’**, **‘have’** and **‘get’**. For example, some of the many possible meanings of **‘get’** are:

1. Receive (get an email)
2. Obtain (get a better view)
3. Bring (get a bucket and mop)
4. Buy (get a new shirt)
5. Arrive (get there at 7pm)



Source: University of Melbourne

If you use the single verb that expresses exactly what you mean by 'get', your writing will be more precise.

1

The researchers **got** results from a large participant group

2

The researchers **obtained** results from a large participant group



How to be concise

Strategy 4: Avoid **convoluted sentences**

To avoid writing **convoluted sentences**, eliminate expletive constructions like ‘there is’, ‘there are’ and ‘it is’. These constructions merely obscure the main subject and action of a sentence.

In 1982, **there were** one billion people in China; today, there are 1.41 billion people.

China’s population grew from one billion in 1982 to 1.41 billion people today.

(The University of Western Australia, n.d.)



How to be concise

Strategy 4: Avoid **convoluted sentences**

More examples:

- **It** was her last argument that finally persuaded me.
- **There are** likely to be many researchers raising questions about this methodological approach.
- **It** is inevitable that oil prices will rise.

Her last argument finally persuaded me.

Many researchers are likely to raise questions about this methodological approach.

Oil prices will inevitably rise.

(The Writing Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.)



How to be concise

Strategy 4: Avoid **convoluted sentences**. Use active voice

Direct Language. Short and Clear

This study sought to identify factors associated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptomatology in U.S. young adults (18-30 years) during COVID-19 pandemic.

(Liu, Zhang, Wong, Hyun & Hahm, 2021)





How to be concise

Strategy 4: Avoid **convoluted sentences**. Use **passive voice**.

Indirect Language. The cause is less important or unknown

Resilience was associated with low levels of depression and anxiety symptoms but not PTSD. **Most respondents had** high levels of social support; social support from family, but not from partner or peers, **were associated with** low levels of depression and PTSD.

(Liu, Zhang, Wong, Hyun & Hahm, 2020)



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