

# Academic and Research Writing: Introduction

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## Learning Outcome

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After completing this chapter, you would be able

- To understand the basic importance of writing and AW skill
- How is AW different from simple writing?
- What are the types of AW?
- What are the basic traits required for AW?
- When to learn AW?
- What actually it is?
- Required tools or components for AW
- Facts and actions required to be a successful academic writer
- Basic flow of action in AW

## Introduction

We, the Humans, are the master species or the God's best creation. Why? Apart from other reasons, because, we can WRITE...The writing skill makes us the unique species. The writing can change the perceptions; it can change the history. It has the almighty power.

When we talk about the academic writing. It can change the generations. Remember the example of Einstein. You know, when Einstein submitted his thesis "**A New Determination of Molecular Dimensions**" (a piece of academic writing obviously) of just 24 pages. It was just returned in first instance with the comment that "***It's fine, but it is too short to be considered as thesis.***" He was well ahead of time from that point only.... And he proved to the world later with his inventions and his writing. In many world class research institutes the thesis is not more than 40- 50 pages. The effective communication matters, not the length...

Your research is incomplete, if you just did the experiments, collected the results and understood it. You have to make a detailed report and submit it. Then only it will serve the purpose. Your report is the basic piece of AW. Moving ahead, until you present the work, in the form of a research or review article, it won't be recognized or be useful for global research fraternity. At this moment I remember the famous quote from Edison

***“Anything that won't sell, I don't want to invent. It's sale is proof of utility, and utility is success.”***

**- Edison**

Yes... THE UTILITY or the need-based research is the demand or the focal point of the current era. Though basic and applied research are equally important, the more focus is there on the applied research. The question is “how can you apply the basic knowledge for the development of humanity and for improving the overall quality of life of human beings?”

Here is the answer. The AW... AW is leading and steering the progress. It is not just about the recognition. Recognition is OK. But actually, we are focusing the recognition of value and quality of life of human being. We are doing the work for sustainability of humanity in this planet. That's why, the dissemination of knowledge and exchange of ideas is required and for that the AW plays a very vital role.

Being the best species in the planet, It is our responsibility to do the sincere efforts to ensure the sustainable development of humanity through the research and academic writing. Do you remember the famous dialogue from the Hollywood Movie Spiderman?

***“With great power comes the great responsibility”.***

So, to use the writing for academic and research purpose, it requires great sense of responsibility.

AW has the power to drive and delegate the future. We were not talking about the deforestation, global warming etc., 3-4 decades ago. We came to know about the vital importance of these issues when the academic writing highlighted these issues in global platform. Now these issues are the hot topic, only because these were presented in an effective and convincing manner with the effective presentation of evidences supporting these things. So, it's clear that without the effective presentation of these issues, in the form of academic writing the issues would have been unexplored and unattended.

As far the knowledge dissemination is concerned the Sanskrit shloka.

न चौरहार्यं न च राजहार्यं न भ्रातृभाज्यं न च भारकारी ।

व्यये कृते वर्धते एव नित्यं विद्याधनं सर्वधनं प्रधानम् ॥

“The wealth that cannot be stolen, neither abducted by state, nor can be divided amongst brothers, neither it is burdensome to carry, the wealth that increases by giving. That wealth is education and is supreme of all possessions”

It describes it as the supreme wealth that increases by sharing.....

In continuation to the previous discussion on introducing Academic Writing, we will discuss here

- How is AW different from simple writing?
- What are the types of AW?
- What are the basic traits required for AW?
- When to learn AW?
- What actually it is?

Let’s begin with a simple example.... See these two sentences

***“Life is nowhere.”***

***“Life is now here.”***

These sentences contain same alphabets but the one sound spessimistic about life while the other sounds optimistic. This proves how the proper writing can change the scenario of the thought processing. Now let’s take another example.

**Mango:** A fruit, juicy, sweet. (Writing)

**Mango:** Juicy stone fruit (drupe) from numerous species of tropical trees belonging to the flowering plant genus Mangifera, cultivated mostly for their edible fruit. (Academic writing)

**It’s different.**

**Guess, how? Try to give the words to the difference...We will answer this after going through the types of AW**

## Types of Academic Writing

In academics, it is a well-established trend and responsibility to share our gathered knowledge via writing essay, passages, dissertation, thesis, research/review articles, short notes, books, abstract, digital writing/ OERs etc.

For all types of writing the basic traits are same.

**The clarity:** In all these forms you must be very clear in communicating your idea to the reader.

**Completeness:** Each communication should be complete in totality... we cannot left it open ended like in literature

**Logic:** The logic must be there

**Technicality:** Technical terms are always used depending on the field of research.

**Sequencing:** Sequence of presenting the information is very important for smooth transition from one point to the next point.

**Unambiguity:** There is no place for ambiguity in AW.

**The reader friendliness** is the key point.

These were some of the special traits of academic writing.

## Learning AW on Time

Most of us don't understand the requirements of academic writing in time and it delays our professional growth and demotivates us. Writing wrong or making mistake in academic writing is considered as ethical crime.

Take an example of ignorance about the ethical crime at the highest level...

In 2014, it was found that a Prof. who was Vice Chancellor of an Indian University was co-author in three papers published between 2007 and 2014 and these three papers were found plagiarized. As per the statement of the Professor "the plagiarized content was a mistake and it won't happen again."

The most important question is "How one can learn academic writing?"

The most possible answers you will get are:

- "I had to learn AW on my own."
- "I learned AW when I was working on my dissertation."
- "Academic writing was very much varying style according to my professors. I picked up a little something from each professor I worked with in graduate school."
- "I am still learning what academic writing is—it seems to change according to journal, colleague, and discipline!"

Are you satisfied with these answers? Or you really want to learn academic writing?

For generations we have wrapped academic writing in mystery— keeping quiet about our own writing issues and publicly shaming those who visibly struggle with theirs. This has to change. Our trouble with writing is not evidence of our unfitness for the profession. It is not some secret sign of unworthiness or ineptitude. It is nothing to be ashamed of. When our writing isn't happening, we need to become willing to admit this and ask for help.

Not even the students but the senior faculty members even run away from publishing their work just due to lack of basic knowledge and confidence of AW.

**And we are here with the solution in the form of this MOOC on Academic Writing. Shall we start from tomorrow? NO... NO... NO....** Tomorrow never comes....let's start today itself.....

So, first of all we have to understand what academic writing actually is:

**Community exercise:** Academic writing is a community exercise. As it is what people do together, it is a community exercise.

**Reader friendliness:** The readership is always the prime focus of academic writing. With the purpose of explaining or persuading the knowledge; one starts writing. In this process the judgment of right and wrong, appropriate or inappropriate is purely defined by the readers. Other students, lecturers or examiners are the judges in the case of academic writing.

**All are nonnatives for academic English:** Academic writing is like a different culture of writing with its own language.

*“It is as it is because that is the way it has developed through centuries of use by practitioners. For that reason, it has to be learned. No-one speaks (or writes) academic English as a first language (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994, p. 8).”*

So leave the fear of being non-native speaker. Now, this learning can be achieved by using observation, study and experiment as the tools.

In the next lecture we will be discussing the basic steps of AW.

Dear learners, after completing this lecture you will be able to understand

- Tools/required components for AW
- How AW is different
- Facts and actions required to be a successful academic writer
- Basic flow of action in AW

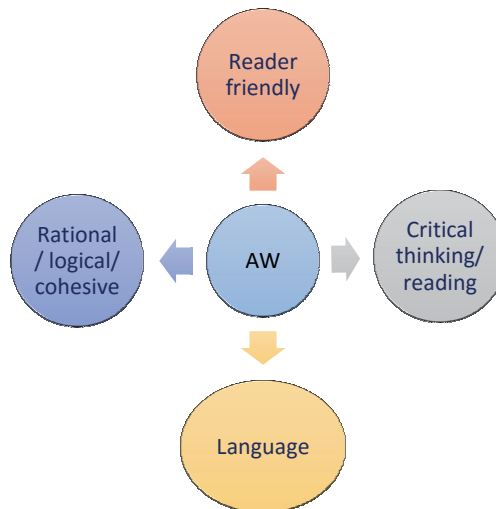
**Let's move to the basic requirements and steps of AW one by one.**

- **Critical reading:** The first and foremost step of academic writing process is critical reading. In this process the reader gets engaged with the text deeply and in a complex manner. This engagement promotes readers **critical questioning** with the context of the text. It also develops the **understanding of judgment** about the **mechanism** of effective communication. **In reading, we just absorb the idea** or understand it while **in critical reading we go through a process of analysis, interpretation and evaluation.** Another difference between reading and critical reading is that in reading our direction of understanding is towards the direction of the

text while in **critical reading** our direction is just opposite as we try to **question every assumption and argument** available. After **reading** we conclude the text as **summary** but in case of **critical reading** we **interpret, describe** the text.

- **Language:** Language is the second important part of academic writing. The most interesting fact about language is that your doing with language (output) is a reflection of language you have absorbed (input). **So to write better, you have to read the best.** Reading the academic write-ups is the first step in the process of writing. Learning one language is a different thing, than getting that language into our awareness. **Academic writing requires the awareness to the language.**
- **Good knowledge of grammar,** vocabulary and mechanics is also a main part of academic writing which helps in clear demonstration of our ideas in a sophisticated and precise way.
- **Other unique required traits of AW are**
  - Rational, logical, sequential flow and reader friendliness
  - The purpose of writing should be argumentary.
  - Academic credibility of content is very important.
  - Connecting ideas and cohesive writing style is a prime requirement in academic writing.

We will discuss these traits in detail in coming section. We have summarized the facts and actions required to be a successful a writer (Fig. 1.1 & Table 1.1).



**Fig. 1.1** Facts and actions required to be a successful Academic writer

**Table 1.1** Facts and actions required to be a successful a writer

Facts	Action required
The journey of being an academic writer is quite personalized.	Adaptation of attitude for understanding the difference between academic writing and other forms of writing.
Academic writing requires specific language skills and writing styles.	Attentive reading of academic write-ups for better exposure to writing language and styles.
There is a significant similarity as well as difference in every type of academic writing.	Observation of macro-level organizational patterns in texts. Comparison of parts of different types of academic writing.
Being a successful writer in other context does not ensure your success in academic writing.	Acceptance of novelty of academic writing with new challenges. Strategic efforts in reading to improve the understanding of academic writing.
From learner to a successful academic writer.	Approach towards the “good” samples/assignments of academic write-ups. Practice and patience are the keys.

### Flow of action in AW

Process of academic writing consists the following steps. Each individual step has its own significance and its necessary to be followed cautiously (Fig. 1.2 & Table 1.2).



**Fig. 1.2** Flow of action in AW

**Table 1.2** Flow of action in AW

Critical Reading	Critical Thinking	Step Two Generating Outlines	Step Three Writing First Draft	Step Four Writing Multiple Draft	Step Five Writing Final Draft	Step Six Publishing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze</li> <li>Evaluate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret</li> <li>Literature review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build framework around the idea</li> <li>Sequencing of idea and sub-idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible ideas</li> <li>Revising outline</li> <li>Visual representation</li> <li>Listing sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of write-up</li> <li>Major changes</li> <li>Feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formatting the final write-up</li> <li>Proof reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up publishers guideline</li> </ul>

Before you start to write, you can **prepare yourself** by

**Developing the connection between ideas:** It will allow you to construct the conceptual framework.

**Updating the knowledge** of current research trends in your discipline.

**By familiarize yourself with the guidelines of the top journals of your field for their stylistic preferences.**

Dear learners! don't be hesitant to admit to learn.

In coming weeks, we will be discussing and covering various aspects of AW and will try to trigger and incubate an effective academic writer in you.

Please do spare some time for the activity. Lastly, please go through these links to update and improve your knowledge.

### Further Reading

1. An Introduction to Academic Writing, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyTLosz6aHA>
2. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-academic-writing-definition-examples-quiz.html>
3. <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/summarizing>

### References

1. <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a-000565688>
2. <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=ET4-QAAQBAJ&pg=PA5&lpg=PA5&dq=%09>
3. Bourdieu P, Passeron JC, Martin MS, Academic Discourse Linguistic Misunderstandings and Professorial Power Polity Press, 1994.



## **Activity Time**

- Critically read two or three related articles of your choice
- Think critically
- Write a concise critical essay out of your understanding
- Check it yourself for consistency
- Get it checked from friends/ mentors