

Academic Writing tutorial

Breaking the ice (approx 10 minutes)

Settle the group and then break the ice by asking the following questions. Feel free to direct questions at individuals if there is a muted response or an individual needs encouragement:

- *'How do you feel about the themes introduced today – were they straightforward or difficult to get your head around?'*
- *'Thinking about the degree that you plan to study at university, what are the different types of written work (assessed and not assessed) that you're likely to undertake?'*
- *'How will the variety of written styles vary at university compared to what you've been used to at school?'*
- *'Other than in the variety of styles, how different will lecturers' expectations be compared to what teachers would accept at school?'*
- *'Were there any themes that you didn't understand or that require further discussion?'*

Summarising the key lecture themes followed by discussion (10 minutes approx)

With the ice broken, direct questions at individuals and then allow discussion to follow:

- *'Without referring to your lecture notes, why is it important to be able to write effectively at university?'*
- *'Again without referring to your notes, what are the characteristics that make for effective writing?'*
- *'Once again, without looking at your notes, if you were preparing a structure for an essay or report, what would the different sections be?'*
- *'What is the purpose of an introduction?'*
- *'What is the function of a conclusion?'*
- *'What information should be included in an appendix?'*

Discussion: Your project report (10 minutes approx)

The next discussion areas relate to the group project although questions should be directed at individuals followed by general discussion:

'What do you think are the key challenges that are specific to preparing a group report?'

'How would you prevent a group report from reading like a series of individual essays?'

'At a practical level, how would you confront a situation where the information prepared by one contributor is notably weaker than the other members of the team?'

'What conditions do you need to proof read effectively?'

'What tips or approaches might you take to proofing your work?'

Exercise 1: Writing succinctly

- Write this statement on the board/computer and ask your students to “rewrite the statement more succinctly, but without removing any of the facts or altering the emphasis”. Students should avoid using abbreviations or contractions.

‘It is within reason to suggest that Wilson can be looked upon as a modernist innovator when one considers the fact that he used harmonics in rock and roll music.’

- Seek feedback, asking “How few words can you reduce the statement to?”

Exercise 2: Writing in a formal academic style

- Write this sentence on the board/pc. The sentence describes the process of division of labour but has NOT been written in a formal way.

‘Splitting the jobs up between different people that worked there was really good as it made making each pin take less long.’

- Ask students to “underline the words or phrases that you think are inappropriate for a formal academic piece of work.”
- Ask students to “replace the words or phrases that you have underlined with more appropriate language then rewrite the completed sentence.”

Exercise 3: Proof reading

- The passage below relates to some work by a Professor Hepburn and is on the hand out.

‘In order to test Hepburns’ theory the group decided to circulate questionnaires amongst residents to collect there opinions. The completed forms gave us lots of different responses. Twenty five respondents said they hadn’t seen the advert whereas 15 said said they have. This told us we would need to collect more info.’

- Ask students “to proof the paragraph and then to circle any grammatical or style errors. How many can you find?”
- Ask students to “rewrite the passage, correcting the errors.”

'In order to test Hepburns' theory the group decided to circulate questionnaires amongst residents to collect their opinions. The completed forms gave us lots of different responses. Twenty five respondents said they hadn't seen the advert whereas 15 said they have. This told us we would need to collect more info.'