Academic Writing: Using Formal Language

It is important to develop a formal academic style in your written assignments, this essentially means:

- Not writing in the same way that you speak.
- Avoiding expressions, or language, that might only be understood in your local surroundings.

In this way, your writing will be clearly understood by anyone who reads it, regardless of their personal context. However, it is important that you do not go to opposite extremes by using over-complicated language or very long sentences.

Top Tips

Avoid slang or colloquialisms

Instead of…	Use…
kids	children
uni	university
row	argument

Avoid clichés

Instead of writing:	Try to be more specific:
At the end of the day…	Finally, or In summary
In this day and age…	Currently or Contemporary
Reading between the lines…	While not openly expressed, this indicates...
Only time will tell…	The result will only be known in the future following the event/issue...

Avoid shortened forms

Instead of…	Use…
Didn't	Did not
Isn't	Is not
Hadn't	Had not

Other common errors to avoid

- Using **would of** instead of **would have** e.g. 'I would have taken a different route.'
- Using **it's** instead of **its** to show possession e.g. 'The cat used its paws to catch the mouse.'
- Poor subject/verb agreement e.g. **they was** instead of **they were**.
- Finally, avoid slipping in and out of third and first person.

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