

CAMBRIDGE

Steps to Academic Writing

Marian Barry

With Key

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INTRODUCTION

Steps to Academic Writing develops the language resources you already have. I am sure you have written personal letters and emails. This means you can already express yourself in an interesting way in English.

This book shows you how to develop your English for academic writing. You will practise writing academic reports and essays, analysing visual information, and writing university and job applications.

Academic writing skills involve being objective, presenting clear explanations and evaluating ideas. Your work should also sound right in an academic context, so this book focuses on achieving a suitable tone in your writing.

How is *Steps to Academic Writing* organised?

The book is divided into eight units covering different aspects of academic writing. The units are all based on interesting topics and ideas such as environmental problems or scientific research. The level of challenge increases as you progress through the book but you can work on the units in any order – you don't have to work from Unit 1 to Unit 8. However, we suggest you work through each unit from start to finish as the activities develop from model examples at the beginning of the unit to writing your own piece at the end. You will be reminded of grammar, spelling and punctuation rules and have a chance to practise them. By the end of each unit, you will feel more confident about each aspect of academic writing.

How can the book help me achieve academically?

Steps to Academic Writing has been written to prepare you for applying for an English-medium university and the academic writing you will need to do as a student.

Here are some examples:

- Unit 1 will help you learn how to write up an evaluation of a project. Being able to evaluate your work is a sign of academic maturity, and it is expected when you have reached a certain academic level.
- Unit 2 will help you practise producing a questionnaire for a survey and writing a report on a survey.
- Units 3, 4, 5 and 6 will help you develop your essay-writing skills, focusing on different kinds of essays that you might have to write at university.
- Unit 7 will develop your skills in analysing charts, graphs and tables, and increase your understanding of how you can use visual information to enhance your academic writing. There is a language bank at the end of this unit summarising some of the words and phrases you can use when you are analysing visual information.
- Unit 8 will help you develop your CV and personal statement for university entrance. You will also practise applying for a job.



What other skills will I learn?

As well as developing your writing skills, and improving your spelling, punctuation and sentence structure, you will develop strong **thinking skills**. You will see this icon in the margin (see left) where activities will develop your thinking skills.

Will this book help prepare me for English language exams?

Yes. Although it is always important to check the requirements of any exam you are taking, this book will help you develop skills that are often tested in English language exams. For example, the essay units will prepare you well for the IELTS Writing Paper, Task 2. Unit 7 will show you how to describe charts and tables, a skill you need for the IELTS Writing Paper, Task 1.

- 2 What methods did he use to check his hypothesis?
- 3 Was his hypothesis proven or not?
- 4 What were the strong and weak points of his research?

Activity 4 Assessing a report



1 Think about these questions.

- How far do you think people are influenced by emotive language? Consider how doctors or dentists use language to get cooperation from patients.
- Alex identified weak points but also strengths. How easy is it to be objective about your work in this way?
- What are the benefits of self-evaluating your own project work?
- Some people feel uncomfortable evaluating their own work. Is this because they feel any weaknesses are an admission of personal incompetence? Or do they feel that recognising a strength is inappropriate self-praise?

2 Look at Alex's report again and answer Yes or No to these points.

The report:

- has a title
- has a clear aim
- is clearly organised with headings and numbered points
- only contains relevant information
- has a reasonably formal style
- includes suitable vocabulary
- has correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Activity 5 Active or passive constructions

Traditionally, science-based investigations were always written about using the passive.

For example:

*Three grams of sodium carbonate **were weighed** using a chemical balance.*

or

*15 participants **were identified** for the control group.*

Over time, however, this strict rule has been relaxed, and you may see an active voice being used.

For example:

***I weighed** three grams of sodium carbonate using a chemical balance.*

or

***We identified** 15 participants for the control group.*

It is important to know how to use both constructions, so you can make your own choice.

The passive is formed with the object of the sentence, plus the verb *to be* in the correct tense and the past participle of the verb required.

1 Put these sentences into the passive. Be careful with irregular verbs. The first one has been done for you.

- a I used exact procedures.
Exact procedures were used.
- b I took precise measurements.
Precise _____.

Activity 4 Essay structure

An essential structure for a problem-solving essay is:

- Introduction – refer to the question and say how you will approach solving the problem given in the question.
- Main text – suggest solutions to the problem with reasons and examples. If the question has two elements e.g. individual/government solutions, cover each element in separate paragraphs. The number of main paragraphs depends on the length of the essay. Two main paragraphs are usually needed for an essay of about 250 words.
- Conclusion – sum up the solutions outlined in the main text and point to the future in a positive and realistic way.

1 Here is Marcus's introduction. It is good because he refers to the question and says how he is going to answer it. Add the punctuation and capital letters to the introduction.

finding solutions to global warming is essential if we are to protect the environment in my view the most effective approach is for governments and individuals to work together to find solutions in this essay i am going to show how we can all take responsibility to protect the earth for ourselves and future generations

2 Good conclusions for problem-solving essays sum up solutions, sound positive, and may point to the future in a realistic way. Choose the best conclusion from the two conclusions below and say why you chose that one.

- A** In conclusion, global warming is a serious problem that we cannot afford to ignore. Individuals can make a difference by the lifestyle they choose, and they can also spread the message to friends and family. As I outlined earlier, I also believe governments should cooperate to research the problem, nationally and internationally, and continue to look for the most effective solutions.
- B** To conclude, global warming has been going on for a long time and may have caused disasters such as hurricanes and flooding. In future, we may see worldwide starvation if crops fail due to drought. It is probably too late now to do anything much about climate change. However, if governments introduced a 'green tax' on everyone immediately, there might be some hope.

Activity 5 Word combinations

Two or more words can be combined to make new expressions. For example, *global* + *warming* gives us *global warming* and *global* + *village* gives us *global village* (the idea that global communication is now as easy as communication in a village due to advances in telecommunications).

Here are some more word combinations, some of which are used in Marcus's essay.

green tax	tidal power	nuclear energy	ozone layer
fossil fuels	carbon sinks	wind farm	acid rain
carbon footprint	greenhouse effect		

Word combinations may be separate words, joined up or joined by a hyphen e.g. life jacket, lifeboat, life-threatening.

Match each of the sentences below with a word combination from the box.

- 1 This causes damage wherever it falls into forests, lakes and the soil.
- 2 This prevents dangerous radiation from the sun reaching us.
- 3 This is a renewable form of energy from the oceans.

PART 2 WRITING ABOUT SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Activity 15 Solving the problems of old age

In this activity you will answer an essay question on solving the problems of old age.

1 Before you answer the question, think about older people you know.

- How do they enjoy themselves?
- What, if anything, is difficult for them?
- What have you noticed about the needs of older people?
- What do the Government or official agencies do to meet their needs?

2 Read the essay question and highlight the key words. Make sure you understand the problem and know what the question requires you to do.

Most of us agree that it is important to take account of the needs of older people. What do you think can be done by official agencies to support older people? What could older people do to help themselves?

3 Brainstorm some ways to reduce the problems faced by elderly people. As you have done before, divide the page into two sections and list your ideas.



2 Study this essay question. Highlight the key words and make sure you understand what is required. Cover the completed brainstorm below before you start.

Many creative people producing artistic work are poorly paid and find it difficult to live on their earnings. Is this situation acceptable? What are your opinions?

This question could be answered with a problem-solving approach. For example, you could decide that it is wrong for creative people to earn low incomes and suggest strategies to help resolve this.

3 Brainstorm some strategies which would help solve the problem of low earnings for creative people. Cover the completed brainstorm below before you start.

Here is Li's brainstorm in answer to the question. Are any of your ideas here?

- educate people to understand why artistic work is worth paying good money for
- raise public awareness of the problem of low earnings in the creative arts
- encourage artists to join professional organisations/network with each other to share ideas
- increase penalties for illegal copying/downloading of music, films and so on
- universities, art colleges and music academies can advise students on how to negotiate fair rates
- organisations and individuals can promote the work of unknown artists through the media
- organisations and individuals can offer practical support such as buying original art or asking creative people to do workshops.

Activity 10 Proofreading

1 There is one extra word in each sentence of Li's essay. Proofread his essay and delete the extra word.

The media portrayal of creative people often gives the impression that these they are usually wealthy people. While it may be true that a few artists are rich, many do not make there a decent living, even though they are talented and produce original work. In this essay, I shall suggest some strategies to improve well the income of creative people.

In the first place, the public we could be educated more effectively about the value of an artist's work. If more people understood the effort that artists put into their work and the skills what they use, they would realise why they should pay reasonable prices. It may also deter people from buying illegal copies or downloading the music illegally.

A further solution is to encourage artists to join with professional associations. These associations can advise them how to market their work and what they should to charge for it. One of my favourite musicians, Sammy Worviel, was he almost cheated when he made his first record because he lacked business experience. Last but not least, artists could also be network with each other to build up commercial knowledge and social contacts.

2 Study Figures 14 and 15 and decide whether the statements are accurate or inaccurate. If you think a statement is incorrect, change it to make it accurate.

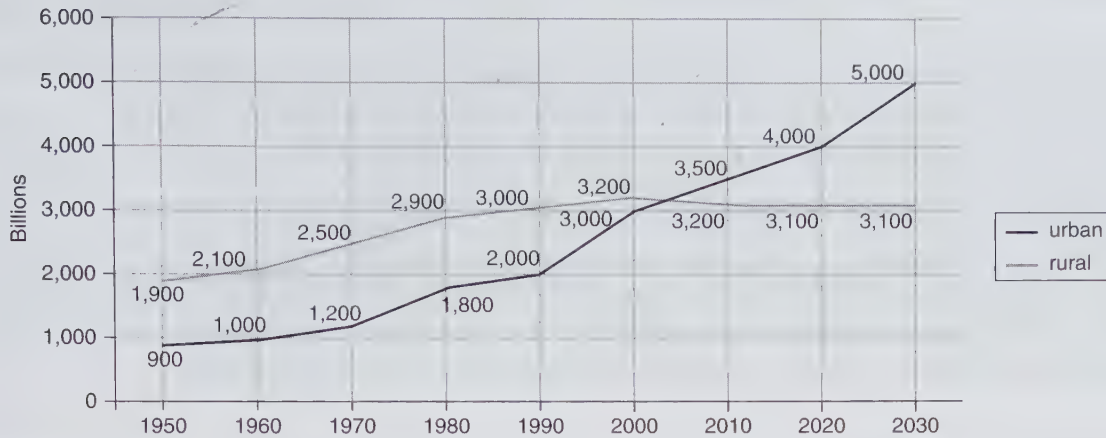


Figure 14 Global urban and rural population projections, 1950–2030

Which of these statements are accurate? Figure 14 shows that:

- In 1950, the global urban population was bigger than the rural population.
- Between 1950 and 1990, the urban and rural populations grew at a fairly similar rate.
- After 1990, there was a rapid increase in the size of the world's urban population.
- After 1990, the global urban population began to level out while the rural population increased dramatically.
- By 2030, there will be no significant gap between the size of the urban and rural populations in the world.

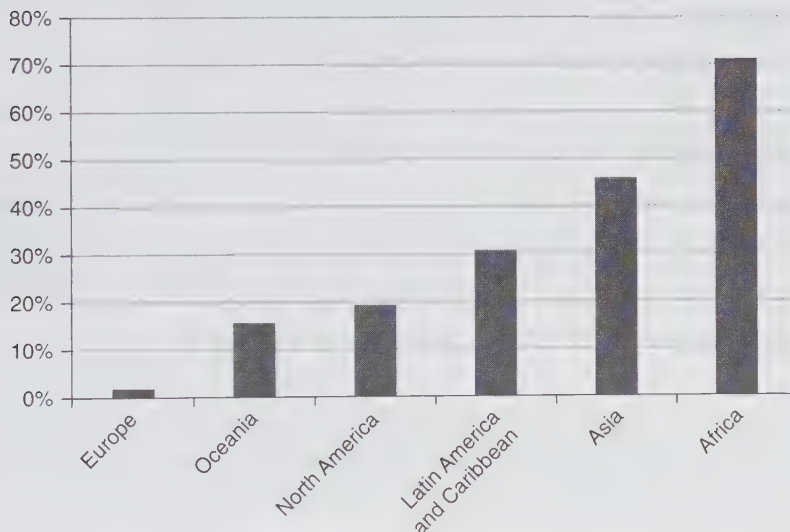


Figure 15 Projected percentage increase in urban populations, 2000–2015

Which of these statements are accurate? Figure 15 shows that:

- Urban populations are expected to increase by 2015.
- The urban population of Asia is predicted to increase more than in any other part of the world.
- The urban population of Oceania (islands of the central and South Pacific including Australasia) will have a bigger percentage increase than North America.

Now write two paragraphs summarising the trends shown in Figures 14 and 15.