

ACADEMIC STYLE

An editing guide

The following is a list of words to avoid while writing in formal, academic English. They are generally considered too informal, simple, vague, or subjective. Examples of alternate word choices are on the right.

TOO INFORMAL:

A bit

A lot, a couple of

Doesn't, couldn't, isn't, etc.

Kind of, sort of

Till

You, your

Kid

Like

Nowadays

EXAMPLES:

The task was ~~a bit~~ **somewhat** difficult

~~A lot of~~ **Many / several / six** scholars say...

This evidence ~~doesn't~~ **does not** support Jung's theory, since...

The character ~~isn't~~ **is not** happy that he failed to do his job

He is ~~kind of~~ **correct somewhat / to a certain degree**

From 2019 ~~till~~ **until / to** 2021,

~~You~~ **One** can understand her difficulty

A study focusing on ~~kids~~ **children**

The author uses literary devices ~~like~~ **such as** metaphor and allusion

~~Nowadays~~, **In recent years**, social media has taken over our lives

TOO SUBJECTIVE:

Wonderful, horrible, good, bad

I, you, we (exception: "I" is allowed in personal essays)

Naturally

Obviously, of course

His argument is ~~good~~ **convincing / reasonable / valid**

~~I think~~ Freud's theory is valid

~~You~~ **One** should quit smoking

The researchers ~~naturally~~ wanted to test their hypothesis

~~Of course~~, The chart shows that

TOO SIMPLE:

Big

Get

Give

Interesting

Poverty is a ~~big~~ **global** problem

The results ~~get~~ **become** more accurate

The author ~~gives~~ **presents** a definition

The author's essay ~~is interesting~~ **encourages debate**

TOO EXAGGERATED:

Always, never

Perfect, best, worst, biggest (-est adjectives)

Very, extremely, really, too, so

Scientists have ~~always~~ **often / typically** argued that

~~The biggest problem~~ **One of the largest problems** facing researchers is

This implication is ~~extremely~~ **crucial**

This theory is ~~very~~ **unique**



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Continued

TOO VAGUE:

Stuff	The social issue affects stuff the economy
Thing	Many things factors / problems / influences caused the event
A long time, a while	They were planning it for a while for five months
People	People The employees agreed with the decision
Et cetera (etc.) / And so forth	Healthy vegetables include carrots, beans, and rutabega, etc.
About / almost / nearly	Nearly all the employees polled were in agreement with the decision
More or less	Inflation is more or less higher than it was last year
Whenever / whatever	Whenever When the next conference happens, we will give a presentation.
Someone / something	Someone The mayor's office should be in favour of this idea

USUALLY UNNECESSARY:

Certainly	Certainly, Rent prices have risen over the last five years
Due to	The house was damaged due to a flood. A flood damaged the house.
Feature, factor	The police were a factor intervened in the altercation
He is a man /she is a woman who ...	She is a woman who owns her public statements and is accountable to voters
Hopefully	Hopefully, The crisis will soon be resolved
Personally	Personally, I do not believe in restricting free speech
Serves to, helps to	This helps to clarify clarifies why his idea is so poignant
The fact that	The fact that She asks the questions proves she is curious
The question as to whether	The question as to Whether the issue has been solved will become clear
The reader	The reader knows The character is keeping secrets
The reason why is that	The reason why Unemployment causes homelessness is that because it is impossible to pay rent without sufficient income
This paper...	This paper argues that Plato's allegory of the cave is a story about how human beings come to know truth
In terms of	In terms of public transport, The city has a poor public transport system
The truth is ...	The truth is Eating too much sugar leads to diabetes
Would / used to ...	We would visit visited our grandmother's house every Friday
Just	The tax rate fell to just 13%

For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre.