



Writing objectively

When writing academic assignments, you are often asked to write objectively. That is, you are expected to present evidence and arguments, but at the same time, to maintain some distance. The requirements for objectivity can vary across disciplines and tasks, so always check the requirements for each of your assignments. However, it is useful to learn to write 'objectively' as it is still a prominent feature of academic writing in many disciplines. Here are some tips to guide you.

1. Write in third person

This means not directly referring to yourself or the reader (e.g. not using 'I', 'my', 'me', 'you', 'your', 'we', 'our' or 'us').

Let's say you want to write something like:

'I think that the best solution...' **'my opinion about the best solution is...'** or *'The best solution to me is to ...'*

To make this idea sound more academic remove the 'I think', the 'my opinion' or the 'to me' and write: **'Based on the evidence presented, it is suggested that the best solution would be ...'**

In this example, you have moved from a personal statement to one with more authority that states something as the logical conclusion of what you have written previously.

2. Use passive voice

Passive voice emphasises the event or action rather than the person doing it, which makes the sentence appear more objective.

Let's say you want to write something like:

'In this paper I will discuss some of the ways that a student can become increasingly independent as a learner.'

This is 'active voice' where the 'I' is doing the 'considering'.

However, if you turn it into passive voice it becomes:

'Some of the ways that a student can become increasingly independent as a learner will be discussed in this paper.'

Notice that the person who has been 'discussing' something (i.e. 'I') has been removed by using the passive voice.



3. Use linking words

Linking words not only connect ideas but also show your point of view.

*Brick (2011) identifies four learning styles to enable students to understand better how they learn. **However**, specific details are not provided on how students with a combination of these learning styles can best utilise them to achieve greater success at University.*

Notice the use of 'However' – not only does it show the connection between the first sentence and the next, but it also shows your thoughts on what the author (i.e. Brick) says.

In this case, 'However' and the idea that follows, show that you think something is missing in Brick's explanation of learning styles.

*Brick (2011) identifies four learning styles to enable students to understand better how they learn. **As a result**, a student can use these explanations to reflect on their own learning and achieve greater success at University.*

Notice the use of 'As a result' – not only does it show the connection between the first sentence and the next, but it also shows your thoughts on what the author (i.e. Brick) says.

In this case, 'As a result' and the idea that follows, show your interpretation of how Brick's explanation of learning styles can be used.

4. Use reporting verbs

Reporting verbs are used when referring to an author and their ideas, and also show your point of view.

*Brick (2011) **identifies** four learning styles to enable students to understand better how they learn.*

Notice the use of 'identifies' – this is a neutral reporting verb and shows that you are not making a strong comment about what Brick says. You are just describing it.

*Brick (2011) **claims** that there are four learning styles which enable students to understand better how they learn.*

Notice how the use of 'claims' qualifies your view of what Brick says. This is an evaluation of what Brick says and shows that you have some doubts about what Brick says.