

## 11. Being logical

Look at the following two paragraphs. Which is more academic?

I can't believe how badly the Japanese government treats foreigners! It's horrible! Now, the government has decided that all foreigners entering Japan must be fingerprinted. Everyone knows this is racial discrimination. These days, many foreign tourists come to Japan every year. They will stop coming if they are treated this badly.

Now, the government has decided that all foreigners entering Japan must be fingerprinted. Many people believe this is racial discrimination. Currently, 8.35 million foreign tourists come to Japan every year (Worsley, 2007). They may stop coming if they are treated this way.

### 1. Avoid exaggerations and statements that are common sense.

When writing your paper you should avoid exaggerations and sentences that state common sense facts. Are these sentences exaggerations (E) or common sense (CS)?

- Many people live in America. \_\_\_
- There are millions of foreign people in this city. \_\_\_
- Cancer is a bad disease. \_\_\_
- People need music to live. \_\_\_
- Everyone loves Japanese food. \_\_\_
- Japanese food is from Japan. \_\_\_

### 2. Avoid emotional/sentimental language.

A research paper must be *objective*, not sentimental. Cross out the emotional words:

great	awful	boring	exciting	fun
wonderful	terrible	horrible	negative	interesting
dangerous	very	terrific	large	incredible

**3. Use formal language.**

A research paper should use formal language, not casual language. Match the casual language below with its formal counterpart in the box:

good point	_____	okay	_____
bad point	_____	really	_____
OK/okay	_____	these days	_____
get better	_____	a lot of	_____
cute/beautiful	_____	kids	_____
just	_____	kind of/sort of	_____
a long time ago	_____	bad	_____

disadvantage	currently/presently	negative
simply	attractive	in the past
reasonable	children	reasonable/acceptable
improve	advantage	rather/somewhat
many/much	very	

**4. Hedge your writing.**

Which sentence is probably better for an academic paper? Check (✓) the best answer.

- \_\_\_ If the drinking age is lowered to 18, many Japanese young people will start drinking.
- \_\_\_ If the drinking age is lowered to 18, many Japanese young people might start drinking.

In academic writing, you must be careful to only write things that are true. If you are not 100% sure something is true, you should *hedge* your writing. There are many ways to do this.

(1) Now, the government has decided that all foreigners entering Japan must be fingerprinted. (2) Many people believe this is racial discrimination. (3) Currently, (4) 8.5 million foreign tourists come to Japan every year (Worsley, 2007). They (5) may stop coming if they are treated this (6) way.

(1) emotional language removed, (2) exaggeration hedged, (3) casual language replaced, (4) common sense statement replaced with a statistic (and reference), (5) sentence hedged with "might" (6) emotional word replaced

Hedging your writing

In academic writing, you must be careful to only write things that are true. If you are not 100% sure something is true, you should *hedge* your writing. There are many ways to do this.

modal verbs	modal adverbs	frequency adverbs	introductory verbs
could, might, may (+ "be")	("be" +) probably, possibly, perhaps	sometimes, often, usually, occasionally	"it" + appears that, looks like, seems that

- ✗ If the drinking age is lowered to 18, many Japanese young people will start drinking.
- ✓ If the drinking age is lowered to 18, many Japanese young people might start drinking.
- ✓ If the drinking age is lowered to 18, many Japanese young people will possibly start drinking.
  
- ✗ Children commit violent crimes after watching violent content in Japanese media.
- ✓ Children sometimes commit violent crimes after watching violent content in Japanese media.
- ✓ It appears that children commit violent crimes after watching violent content in Japanese media.

Which sentences are acceptable? Check ✓ or ✗.

- Whales may disappear if Japan continues its whaling program.
- Whales will disappear if Japan continues its whaling program.
- There is the possibility that whales will disappear if Japan continues its whaling program.
  
- The death penalty does not reduce murders in Japan.
- It seems that the death penalty does not reduce murders in Japan.
- The death penalty probably does not reduce murders in Japan.
  
- American fast food chains are often responsible for Japanese young people’s health problems.
- American fast food chains might be responsible for Japanese young people’s health problems.
- American fast food chains are responsible for Japanese young people’s health problems.

Hedge the following sentences:

Capital punishment prevents violent crime.

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Tokyo is the most dangerous city in Japan.

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\*You do not have to hedge your writing if you give evidence or examples to support your idea.

12. Academic writing tips

Here are some final tips for making your writing “academic”.

**1. Avoid writing in the first person.**

When writing your paper you should avoid using “I”, “we” and “you”. Find other ways to write your sentences:

I think American gun laws must be stricter.  
I have included a graph with this essay.  
We should start recycling more.



American gun laws must be stricter  
 A graph has been included with this essay.  
 Japanese people should start recycling more.

**Rewrite the following sentences using academic English:**

We must think about what television programs we allow children to watch.

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There are chances for courts to make mistakes, so I don’t think Japan should use the death penalty.

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**2. Explain your acronyms.**

Sometimes the name of something is very long, and people might use an acronym or short form when talking about it, for example:

the United States of America → USA

a television commercial → a TV CM

When you are writing an academic paper, you may use the short form of a word or name, but the first time you write that word or name, you should write it in the long form, with the short form in parentheses ( ). After the first time, you can use the short form.

**Write acronyms for these:**

Federal Bureau of Investigation FBI

automatic teller machine \_\_\_\_\_

Human Immunodeficiency Virus \_\_\_\_\_

unidentified flying object \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Avoid contractions.**

Academic writing should not use contractions. Rewrite the contractions:

it's → <u>it is</u>	let's → _____	didn't → _____
they're → _____	can't → _____	he'd → _____
we'll → _____	won't → _____	they've → _____

**4. Don't be redundant.**

Please cross out the sentences that are unnecessary:

You should not be redundant in Academic Writing. You shouldn't repeat the same thing again and again. You only have a short essay to convince the reader that your thesis statement is true, so you should not waste words. Being redundant wastes words. Do not repeat the same information. This is redundant. It's not good for Academic Writing. Because it is repeating the same information. Repeating the same information is a waste of space.

**Language Focus: emphasising**

It is important to remember...

Above all, ...

\_\_\_\_\_ should not forget that...

\_\_\_\_\_ cannot be ignored.