# Improving Your Academic Writing Style by Dr Jo Cormac [Video Transcript]

This is a short video to help you improve your academic writing style. There are really only 3 things you need to remember when writing your essays: be clear, formal and objective.

## Clarity.

The most important thing to do is get to the point. Don’t waffle.

The first sentence of your paragraph should make your point in a simple and concise way. Restructuring your sentences slightly may help.

For example, how might this be improved?

* It is traffic that causes the most pollution as more and more people own cars and find driving more convenient than using public transport.

Well the ‘it is this that...’ construction adds unnecessary words and stops you from getting to the point. The sentence also contains more than one idea. It says that traffic causes pollution and then why this is. Now, as you should start a paragraph with a short, simple sentence it would be better to split this sentence into two as in this version:

* Traffic causes the most pollution. This is because driving is increasingly more popular than using public transport.

## Formal.

Academic writing should be much more formal than everyday speech. It is therefore important to remember to avoid using contractions. So, don’t becomes do not. And shouldn’t becomes should not.

You shouldn’t use the type of writing you might on social media or in text messages. Equally, don’t use colloquial phrases, such as ‘At the end of the day’. Instead it would be better to write ‘Having considered the evidence, it appears that...’ Try not to use ‘A lot/loads’. Instead you might write ‘Considerable amounts or significant or numerous’. Take some time to find appropriate synonyms.

## Be objective.

The final thing to remember is to be objective. You need to show that you have weighed up all the evidence before coming to your conclusion rather than simply putting forward your own biases and prejudices.

For this reason, it is important to write in the third person. This means that you shouldn’t use pronouns such as I or you. Find ways around this. For example, instead of writing, ‘I am going to investigate...’ You could use ‘This essay will investigate...’

It is also useful to use the passive rather than active voice. An example of the active voice is ‘I interviewed 30 participants.’ To make this passive we swap the subject around so it reads ‘30 participants were interviewed.’

Finally, avoid using emotive language. For example, the sentence ‘I believe that the amount nurses are paid is appalling’ provokes a strong response and is clearly based on the author’s personal opinion.

Toning down the language makes the argument appear more reasoned. For example, you might like to write: ‘The evidence suggests that there should be a reform of nurses’ pay.’

Remember, all you need to do is be clear, formal, and objective.

Thank you.