

Block**1****Improving the Basics**

COURSE INTRODUCTION	03
BLOCK INTRODUCTION	04
UNIT 1	
DEVELOPING CRITICAL, ANALYTICAL, AND INTERPRETIVE THINKING SKILLS	05
UNIT 2	
THE PROCESS APPROACH TO WRITING	17
UNIT 3	
ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC WRITING	27
UNIT 4	
KINDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING	42

EXPERT COMMITTEE

Prof. Amol Padwad
Professor & Director
Centre for English Language Education
Ambedkar University, Delhi.

Prof. Anju Sahgal Gupta (Retd.)
Professor, School of Humanities
IGNOU.

Dr. Krishna Kalyan Dixit
Associate Professor
Centre for English Language Education
Ambedkar University, Delhi.

Ms. Ruchi Kaushik
Associate Professor
Shri Ram College of Commerce
University of Delhi.

Dr. Chhaya Sawhney
Associate Professor
Gargi College, University of Delhi.

Prof. Malati Mathur
Director
School of Humanities
IGNOU.

IGNOU FACULTY (ENGLISH)

Prof. Neera Singh
Prof. Nandini Sahu
Prof. Parmod Kumar
Dr. Pema Eden Samdup
Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo
Dr. Malathy A

COURSE COORDINATION

Dr. Malathy A
Assistant Professor
School of Humanities
IGNOU.

COURSE EDITING

Prof. Anju Sahgal Gupta
Professor (Retd.)
School of Humanities
IGNOU.

COURSE PREPARATION

Units 1 & 2: Sayan Chaudhuri, Assistant Director, Critical Writing Programme, Ashoka University.
Units 3 & 4: Anuj Gupta, (Formerly) Assistant Director, Critical Writing Programme, Ashoka University.
Unit 5: Deepti Sreeram, Head of the Writing and Communication Centre, Anant National University.
Unit 6: Sameer Abraham Thomas, Faculty Associate, Centre for Writing & Pedagogy, KREA University.
Unit 7: Anannya Dasgupta, Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Writing and Pedagogy, KREA University.
Unit 8: Prof. Anju Sahgal Gupta (formerly), SOH, IGNOU.
Units 9 & 10: Dr. Mukti Sanyal, (Former) Principal, Bharti College, University of Delhi.
Unit 11: Monishitha Pande, Assistant Director, Critical Writing Programme, Ashoka University.
Unit 12: Ruchi Kaushik, Associate Professor of English, Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi.
Units 13 & 14: Monal Dewle, Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University.
Unit 15: Cheryl Jacob, (Formerly) Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University
Unit 16: Nupur Samuel, Assistant Professor, Jindal University.

SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Monika Syal, AE (DP), SOH, IGNOU

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Dear learner,

Welcome to the course Academic Writing and Composition (BEGG 173)!

This is a generic course of 6 credits offered in the fifth semester of BA General and the third semester of the BA Honours programme. As students we regularly need to write assignments which include essays, reports, projects, summaries, reviews and so on. We sometimes face difficulties while writing these, even when we know the subject thoroughly, because we are not trained in the process of writing for academic purposes. In this course (6 credits) we focus on the aspects to be considered to make academic writing effective. We begin by discussing the critical thinking skills necessary to be a more reflective thinker, reader and writer. We then focus on what makes academic writing different from non-academic writing and proceed to introduce you to different kinds of academic writing. We also discuss the aspects to be considered while writing paragraphs and composition, skills such as summary writing, note making and note taking – all of which will be extremely useful not just in your student life, but also later at the workplace. Issues such as copyright and plagiarism are extremely significant in any type of academic writing, and are therefore discussed in detail, so that you are aware of the implications of copyright laws. Learners are also introduced to the different approaches required in various types of writing such as reports, proposals, book and media reviews and are also given some training in editing skills. Throughout the course, our aim has been to help you to understand the basics of good writing and help you to improve your academic writing skills, and become more critical and reflective in your writing.

The writers of the Units have, with great care, introduced a lot of interesting activities in the material. Do take time to complete these as well as the self-check exercises, which will help you to evaluate yourself as you go through the course. We hope you find this course a great learning experience. We wish you the very best in your studies!

The course contents are given below:

Block 1: Improving the basics

Unit 1: Developing critical, analytical, and interpretive thinking skills

Unit 2: The process approach to writing

Unit 3: Academic and non-academic writing

Unit 4: Kinds of academic writing

Block 2: Writing effectively

Unit 1: The basics of writing

Unit 2: Writing a paragraph

Unit 3: Developing a composition

Unit 4: Issues of copyright and plagiarism

Block 3: Developing different types of compositions

Unit 1: Expository Writing

Unit 2: Narrative Writing

Unit 3: Argumentative Writing

Unit 4: Persuasive Writing

Block 4: Different types of writing

Unit 1: Writing reports

Unit 2: Writing proposals

Unit 3: Book and media reviews

Unit 4: Learning to edit

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block (**Block 1: Improving the Basics**), we discuss the fundamentals of good academic writing and composition.

Unit 1: **‘Developing critical, analytical, and interpretive thinking skills’** discusses the foundational elements of critical thinking, and aims at helping you to become a more self-aware and critical thinker, reader, and writer. This unit provides guidance on how to analyse, interpret and reflect while you read and write; these are extremely important skills in any type of academic writing.

Unit 2: **‘The process approach to writing’** helps you to understand the difference between the process and product approaches to writing and the advantages of the process approach. The unit discusses the components of the process approach, and introduces a set of techniques and exercises to prepare, organise, write, and edit writing assignments.

Unit 3: **‘Academic and non-academic writing’** addresses some basic questions about academic writing. The unit clarifies what academic writing is all about and aims at motivating you to pursue academic writing.

Unit 4: **‘Kinds of academic writing’** gives you an overview of the different kinds of academic disciplines or subjects, the kind of knowledge they produce and share, and the kinds of related academic writing they use. It also aims at equipping you to train yourself to enter these academic disciplines by learning about the types of academic writing done in your field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The material we have used for this course is purely for educational purposes. Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders of material used in this book. Should any infringement have occurred, the publishers and editors apologise, and will be pleased to make the necessary corrections in future editions of this book.

UNIT 1: DEVELOPING CRITICAL, ANALYTICAL AND INTERPRETIVE THINKING SKILLS

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Foundational elements for critical thinking
 - 1.2.1 Applying critical thinking skills to writing
- 1.3 Learning to analyse
- 1.4 Learning to interpret
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Suggested Reading
- 1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you:

- Learn techniques and exercises to summarise, identify arguments, and reflectively interpret texts
- Learn how critical thinking skills can be applied to everyday life
- Become a more self-aware and critical thinker, reader, and writer

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Why do we need to practise critical thinking? The simple answer is that it helps you live more meaningfully. It helps you understand why people behave in the ways they do, and very importantly, it enhances your capacity to contribute to social change. But let us also ask the age-old question: what exactly is critical thinking? While there are many definitions provided by philosophers through history, we shall think of three essential components that are common across many definitions:

1. The capacity to comparatively judge different objects, ideas, and even people. Moreover, one is able to reflect on the basis of judgments itself, and improve one's judgments over time.

For example, if you had to judge the speech of a politician, you would not simply think of whether it sounds good or whether it appeals to your existing biases. Instead, as a critical thinker, you would judge whether the speech made valid arguments, and whether the opinions presented were factually correct and ethically desirable. You would also reflect on what you feel, to ensure you are not getting emotionally manipulated. To exercise critical judgment, then, you will need to *read* different aspects of the speech and also compare it with other speeches. This brings us to the next point:

2. The capacity to closely read different texts. This involves identifying context and analysing the details of a text.

For example, when you read editorials in a newspaper, you should not simply accept the views that are provided. As a critical reader, you must see if the sentences are logically following from each other, and you must assess the arguments and evidence provided by reading up on them further. In other words, you have to engage with different perspectives to critically assess the one which is most meaningful for you.

3. The capacity to question and re-create established meanings.

Critical thinking implies that you do not take things for granted, that you do not simply accept what is presented to you as 'true' by established authorities. For example, as a critical thinker, you should also compare, closely read, and question the definitions that are being provided here. As a critical thinker, you can develop these definitions further, make them more relevant to yourself and the wider society.

Check your progress 1

Go over the three components of critical thinking mentioned above. Now think of an everyday activity that you do (listening to a lecture, watching the news, reading a book) and reflect on how you can apply these three components to that activity.

1.2 FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking can be better understood as a combination of many different mental activities. In this section, you will learn about certain techniques through which you can train yourself to think, read, and write critically. These techniques can be understood as the foundational elements to develop critical thinking skills:

- a) **Listening and observing:** Listening, as you know, is an everyday activity. But when we listen, are we passively receiving information or actively engaging with what we hear? Active listening involves attentively comprehending the content as well as observing the context in which one is speaking. Observing involves noticing the various details that constitute any event or text, without strong preconceptions and biases.

For example, imagine you have a disagreement with a friend. Whether the conversation will end up in a shouting match or result in a meaningful exchange of ideas will somewhat depend on how you are listening and observing.

- b) **Gathering data:** Both listening and observing are required to 'gather' the information and data through which you can make sense of the world. When you read a book, the data includes the words and sentences, the references and examples used, and the social contexts and intentions of the author. When you listen to classroom lectures and

discussions, the data includes the verbal content of the teacher and fellow students, the body language of the speakers, and the use of objects such as a blackboard or projector.

To conduct a study or research, the first step is always to gather the relevant information or data which you will then organise and interpret. To gather data, there are some useful habits that can help: taking notes as you observe what is happening around you, highlighting and underlining what you are reading, recording audio or video clips when you conduct interviews, creating a list of all the relevant details that you have gathered through observation, among others. It is also important that you reflect on your biases as you collect data. If you only gather selective data that reinforce what you already believe in, you will end up producing limited and misleading interpretations.

- c) **Organising and labelling the data:** After having gathered the required information, you will now have to organise and label the data. To organise the data, you will need to identify patterns and assess how the data can be organised under specific labels or categories.

For example, as you are reading this unit, you must be observing different kinds of data. Different types of information are being presented to you. Now if you had to organise them, you might want to label them as headings, definitions, explanations, and examples. You could think of even more categories. This will help provide a broader overview of how different elements have gone into creating this chapter. Now once you have organised the data, you can begin analysing and interpreting the data in a more systematic manner.

Check your progress 2:

Choose a space you live or work within. Notice the objects, people, and activities in that environment. Write down a short paragraph describing and classifying all the 'data' that you see around you, without judging it. Try to go into as much detail as possible.

1.2.1 Applying critical thinking skills to writing

In this section, we will discuss how the foundational elements we learned in the previous section can help develop crucial writing habits.

- a) **Learning to accurately summarise:** A summary is a shorter, condensed version of a longer piece. To accurately summarise what someone is saying or what you are reading in an article, you will need to listen and observe carefully. There is always the risk of misunderstanding what you read or hear, so it is important to pay attention, ask for clarifications or re-read, and take notes if required. Before making your own judgment about the content you are reading, it is necessary to ensure that you are properly comprehending the content. To do this, you will also need to carefully read the

argument of what is presented and understand how the ideas in the argument are logically connected.

Task 1: Summarise ideas you disagree with

One way in which you can get better at this skill is by practising summarising ideas that you disagree with or have negative opinions about. Often our disagreements may be rooted in a distorted version of the idea, or strong biases prevent us from carefully reading and listening to the idea. After carefully summarising, you might still judge the idea to be disagreeable, but only this time your judgment will be far more credible. When you are having an argument, we may end up hearing through a strongly biased lens, so that it is easy for us to caricature the other's opinion. This also leads to a loss of trust between those arguing and creates a polarised atmosphere. Being able to summarise well means you can also build trust in a conversation. Before summarising, you may wish to look up encyclopaedia or dictionary entries on those ideas, to understand how a summary of a topic can be written. For example, have a look at the introduction to the term 'Academic Writing' on Wikipedia:

'Academic writing or scholarly writing is nonfiction writing produced as part of academic work. Writing that reports on university research, writing produced by university students, and writing in which scholars analyze culture or propose new theories are all sometimes described as academic writing. Though the tone, style, content, and organization of academic writing vary across genres and across publication methods, nearly all academic writing shares a relatively formal prose register, frequent reference to other academic work, and the use of rhetoric to convey the topic effectively.'

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_writing)

While there are many definitions of academic writing and the introduction itself cites many other articles, what has been presented is a broad summary. You will notice that the summary is descriptive and just lists some broad characteristics of what academic writing is. It does not present any strong judgments or biases.

The summary is an important first step for all kinds of critical thinking. It helps you ground yourself in a careful and accurate understanding of a topic before you go on to critically interpret it.

- b) **Learning to detail:** When you are reading or observing anything, it is essential to note down the various details that you can notice. As you observe more detail, your understanding will become more sophisticated and complex. While summarising will give you an overall idea about what you are reading or observing, detailing will help you think about the different layers of the idea.

Task 2: Detailing everyday activities

To get better at noting down details, you can think of everyday activities that you do and write them down in increasing detail. For example, have a look at how the simple act of sitting on a chair can be described in levels of increasing detail:

Level 1: I am sitting on a chair.

Level 2: I am happily sitting on a plastic chair.

Level 3: I am happily sitting on a plastic chair, wondering what I can read next.

In the previous example, each of the elements of the first sentence ('I', 'sitting', 'chair') can be further detailed to describe the idea in greater social and psychological complexity. You can do the same exercise with different objects, events, and ideas.

Task 3: Summative detailing

You can also do a similar exercise for texts that you read. Here, though, you will have to summarise what you are reading in varying levels of detail. Suppose you had to summarise the following passage:

"Summary is indispensable in preparing for and writing an argumentative essay. When you summarize a text (or describe visual material), you distill the ideas of another source for use in your own essay. Summarizing primary sources allows you to keep track of your observations. It helps make your analysis of these sources convincing, because it is based on careful observation of fact rather than on hazy or inaccurate recollection. Summarizing critical sources is particularly useful during the research and note-taking stages of writing. It gives you a record of what you've read and helps you distinguish your ideas from those of your sources."

(<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/summary> Harvard College Writing Centre)

Summaries in levels of increasing detail:

Level 1: Summarizing sources is useful to write an argumentative essay.

Level 2: Summarizing primary sources and critical sources is useful to write an argumentative essay, in order to extract the ideas from the sources.

Level 3: Summarizing primary sources, to note down observations, and summarizing critical sources, to record one's reading and distinguish one's ideas from the sources, are useful to write an argumentative essay. Summarizing helps extract the ideas from the sources.

You can see that there are more details being included in each summary. This exercise will also help you think about which details to use as you increase or decrease the word count of the summary. Summative detailing grounds your understanding of what you are reading, and is a necessary first step before you go on to evaluate and interpret the same.

c) Learning to organise and evaluate

Critical thinking primarily involves learning to identify patterns in what you are observing and reading and organise the information/data according to certain labels and categories. This requires an evaluation of what you are observing and reading. There are two aspects to evaluation. First, we can classify what we read and observe into different categories to understand how a larger whole can be broken down into smaller elements - we will call this 'analysis'. Second, we can build our own judgment about what we read and observe - we will call this 'interpretation'.

The next two sections will discuss certain techniques through which we can learn to analyse and interpret better.

Check your progress 3

Read the following passage and respond to the questions that follow:

Hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school. While the “formal” **curriculum** consists of the courses, lessons, and learning activities students participate in, as well as the knowledge and skills educators intentionally teach to students, the hidden curriculum consists of the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school. (from Glossary of Education Reform, <https://www.edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/>)

Q.1: What is the central idea in the passage? Summarise in one crisp sentence.

1.3 LEARNING TO ANALYSE

Imagine you are listening to a popular song. Now if someone asks you what you think about the song, you might say you like or dislike it. In other words, you would mention your spontaneous response to the song, based on how you feel about it. But does this count as analysis? Not quite.

If you were to analyse the song, you would have to first break down the song into its constituent elements: the beat structure, the melody, the different parts of the song. Then you would have to observe and examine the specific elements to have a more qualitative judgment of how they are. This will also require you to learn the appropriate conceptual or technical vocabulary to help you undertake the analysis.

In other words, analysis is a combination of breaking down a larger entity into smaller elements and examining both the parts and the whole to critically assess them. Now how can we analyse texts that we read? There are three basic techniques we can use, let us go over them one by one.

a. Identifying the parts of a narrative:

When you are reading any long passage, you will notice that different parts of the passage are serving different functions. It is important to break apart the passage into different parts and then examine the functions they might be serving. For example, let us read the following passage:

“We are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to, help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us. That world addresses us to produce the different identities we carry forward in life: men are addressed differently than are women, people of color differently than whites, elite students differently than those from working families. Yet, though language is fateful in teaching us what kind of people to become and what kind of society to make, discourse is not destiny. We can redefine ourselves and remake society, if we choose, through alternative rhetoric and dissident projects. This is where critical literacy begins, for questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane.”

(from “What is Critical Literacy?” Ira Shor, 2009)

The basic idea in the passage is that language shapes what we are and do, and by changing how we use language, we can change our identities and recreate society. While that is the overall idea, we can break it down into different sections and notice what each of these sections are about. We can divide the passage into three sections or parts. The first section is establishing a context; the second section is introducing a contrast; and the third section is establishing a definition. Let us have a look at the different sections:

Section 1: Establishing a context

A. 'We are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to, help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us.'

B. 'That world addresses us to produce the different identities we carry forward in life: men are addressed differently than are women, people of color differently than whites, elite students differently than those from working families.'

In this section, a set of preliminary assertions are being presented to you. The latter half of the passage can only be understood if you comprehend this part. In other words, a context is being established. You could also further divide this section into two subsections A and B. Subsection A consists of a few generalised assertions ('we are what we say and do') while subsection B provides a reason and some examples to justify the assertions. You could also break down subsection B further, to examine the different types of examples being used. In other words, you can continue to break down the broad idea into as many smaller parts as you can, to be able to attentively examine the role of each part.

Section 2: Introducing a contrast

'Yet, though language is fateful in teaching us what kind of people to become and what kind of society to make, discourse is not destiny. We can redefine ourselves and remake society, if we choose, through alternative rhetoric and dissident projects.'

Here, you will notice that a contrast is being introduced to the previous idea or the context that has already been established. In the previous section, it was said that language shapes identity, but now that idea is being qualified to say that even if language shapes identity, it is not something people have to passively accept. Instead, different choices can also be made. The important detail to notice about this paragraph is the word 'Yet'. This word announces a contrast, which directs the reader to now think of the possibility of redefining oneself through language.

Generally, when you are trying to find how a passage can be divided into smaller parts, do pay attention to the transitions in argumentation and language. Certain words will clearly announce the intention of the writer or speaker and help you understand the logical relation between different parts of the narrative.

Section 3: Establishing a definition

'This is where critical literacy begins, for questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane.'

This section closes the passage by introducing the term ‘critical literacy’ as a way to define and explain the idea in the previous section (language that can redefine identities and remake society). Again, you can break this section down further by identifying how this definition lists three elements (power relations, discourses, and identities).

Now, while you may get better at breaking down and dividing longer passages into separate, smaller elements, you will also need to identify and examine the specific arguments that make up the larger narrative.

b) Decoding the argument:

To closely analyse a text, we will need to identify the ‘argument’ of the text. An argument, simply put, is any idea that is supported and backed up by reasons and evidence. To learn to decode arguments, we have to first get familiar with some terms:

Claim: A statement, assertion, or proposal where some idea or perspective is being conveyed.

For example: The sentence ‘Climate change is a big threat to the future of humanity’ is a claim. Now whether we can judge this claim to be a credible, trustworthy one will depend on whether we can back up this claim with reasons.

Reason: A reason is a type of statement that logically supports or serves as evidence for a claim.

For example: To support the previous claim, we could use the reason ‘The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts a temperature rise of 2.5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century, which would cause significant harm to different parts of the world.’

Now just because a claim is supported by a reason does not mean that it is a good argument. We could make up all kinds of nonsensical reasons to support dangerous and untruthful claims. Suppose a person makes the following argument, consisting of a claim (symbolised as C) supported by reasons (symbolised as R1 and R2).

C: I believe the world is flat.

R1: Because my parents believe so.

R2: Because I read it on the internet.

Now while this is definitely an argument since there is a claim supported by two reasons, should we consider these reasons to be adequate to believe the claim? What we read on the internet or what our family and friends tell us may not be true, and so it would be important to verify the claim from other more reliable and expert sources. In other words, it is necessary to examine the claims and reasons themselves to analyse the argument.

c) Examining ideas and arguments:

To examine arguments, it is important to ask a set of questions with which you can clarify your understanding. These questions can examine different aspects of the argument and narrative. While a variety of questions can be asked, a few fundamental questions include:

- i) Can the claims and reasons be verified through multiple reliable sources?
- ii) What could be possible counter-arguments or challenges to the claims and reasons?

- ii) What is the intent and position of the author?
- iii) What are the biases in the argument?

By asking these questions, you will begin to critically evaluate the argument. However, this act of asking questions is also very subjective. You are asking these questions from your own interests, positions, and biases. You have thoughts and feelings about what you are reading and observing based on your own experiences. In other words, you cannot ever fully examine ideas and arguments from a detached, objective position. In the next section, we will explore the subjective aspects of thinking and evaluation, that is, the task of interpretation.

Check your progress 4

Read the following passage and respond to the questions asked:

“Engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher. As leaders and facilitators, teachers must discover what the students know and what they need to know. This discovery happens only if teachers are willing to engage students beyond a surface level. As teachers, we can create a climate for optimal learning if we understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the classroom. That means we need to take time to assess who we are teaching. When I first began work in the classroom, like many teachers, I was most concerned, if not a bit obsessed, with whether or not a substantive amount of information and assigned material was covered. To make sure we had time in the classroom to cover the material that I believed really mattered, I did not take the time to ask students to introduce themselves or to share a bit of information about where they were coming from and what their hopes and dreams might be. I noticed, though, that when I did make time for everyone to get acquainted, the classroom energy was more positive and more conducive to learning.”
(from “Teaching Critical Thinking”, 2009, Bell Hooks)

Q.1: How would you divide the passage into smaller sections?

Q.2: In the extract ‘As leaders and facilitators who we are teaching’, what is the central claim and what are the reasons supporting the claim?

Q.3: What do you think is the bias of the author in this passage? What could be a possible counter-argument to the author’s point of view?

1.4 LEARNING TO INTERPRET

Learning to interpret is perhaps a bit of a paradox. You are already interpreting the world around you, constantly, consciously and unconsciously. It is impossible to be functional in the world without minimally making sense of what is going on around you. However, you may not always pay attention to how you are interpreting the world and how you may wish to cultivate it further. Further, your interpretation may be swayed by forces around you without you necessarily noticing. This is why it becomes important to practise critical interpretation, so that you can consciously set up a conversation between your own understanding of the world and what others have to say.

Interpretation consists of at least two basic elements: reflection and synthesis. Reflection refers to the act of introspecting about what you read and observe. It involves asking how and why things happen the way they do and cultivating a deeper engagement with what we read and observe. Synthesis refers to the act of connecting our responses and reflections into a coherent narrative or argument.

Task 4: Reflecting on everyday life

A good place to begin is by asking yourself how you interpret everyday activities that you do. Think of an activity that you do every day--reading, walking, singing, cooking, taking care of family--and reflectively jot down your understanding of the same. You may think of the following questions:

What do I feel when I do this activity?

Why do I engage with this activity? What significance does it have for me?

How do I speak about this activity to other people?

How do others speak about this activity? Do I agree or disagree with them?

Would I like to do it differently?

You can practise this reflective exercise for any activity that you do, relationships that you have, and events that you see. This will help generate greater self-awareness about each aspect of your life.

Task 5: Reflecting on what you read

Frequently, we are magnetised by what we read and are unable to question the authority of the text. To reflectively read means that we will pay attention to what we are reading, ask questions when we do not understand or are not convinced, and explore what we are specifically interested in. Now let us read the following passage:

‘When reading a book, we should be receptive to any passage that triggers a deeper reflection on any topic, even if it’s not the main subject of the book. Sensing a possible relationship between the read passage and our preoccupation, we as good readers should concentrate on analyzing the text, looking for a connection between the main idea and our own interest.’

(from “Act of Study”, Paulo Freire)

As soon as you finished reading, you were left with some thoughts, feelings, and perhaps even some words. Jot down your first impressions. Now go back and read again, but this time pause whenever a word or idea strikes you, look up what it means or what others have said about it, connect it with your own life and social contexts you see around you, discuss your thoughts with friends and family. The more you reflectively engage with the passage, the more deeply you will interpret it.

Finally, after having done all the tasks which have been listed through this chapter, you will now have to synthesise all that you have learned and reflected upon into a coherent response. In your journey through academic writing, you will learn how to synthesise or put together your summative understanding, your identification and analysis of arguments, and your interpretive responses in writing. For now, begin synthesizing what you know already.

Check your progress 5

Write a short paragraph on what you learned from this chapter. You should include a short summary of what was discussed, identify the arguments made in this chapter, and provide a brief reflective interpretation of your own thoughts as you read the chapter.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we discussed certain foundational elements of critical thinking, analysis, and interpretation and how we can apply them to cultivating writing habits. We learned some techniques and exercises through which we can think and reflect on everyday life as well as texts that we read.

1.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Hooks, Bell. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
Internet resources:

<https://www.innovativeteachingideas.com/blog/critical-thinking-for-teachers-and-students>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-writing-centre/critical-reading-and-writing/critical-review>

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/summary>

<https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/critical/ct.php>

1.7 ANSWERSTO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress 1

Write your answer in your own words.

Check your progress 2

Write your answer in your own words.

Check your progress 3

The hidden curriculum, distinct from the formal curriculum, refers to the unwritten values and messages students learn in school.

You can also try to write in sentences of varying detail.

Check your progress 4

Q.1: One option can be:

Section 1: Providing a definitional context: 'Engaged pedagogy.... teaching.'

Section 2: Illustrating through personal example: 'When I... conducive to learning.'

Try to break them down into even smaller sections.

Q.2: Claim: Teachers should engage with what students want and need to know.

Reason: An optimal learning environment can be created by understanding the emotional intelligence of students in the classroom.

Q.3. One bias could be that the author believes that engaging with students' knowledge will necessarily improve the classroom experience for everyone. Another bias could be that the author is generalising from her own experience. A possible counter-argument could be that not all teachers might be able to practically engage with students' knowledge and experience, especially in really large classrooms.

Check your progress 5

Write your answer in your own words.

UNIT 2 THE PROCESS APPROACH TO WRITING

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Process vs Product
- 2.3 Advantages of the Process Approach
- 2.4 The Different Stages of the Process Approach
 - 2.4.1 The Pre-writing Stage
 - 2.4.2 The Writing Stage
 - 2.4.3 The Editing and Revising Stage
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Suggested Readings
- 2.7 Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to:

1. Understand the difference between the process and product approach to writing
2. Learn techniques to plan, write, and edit a writing assignment
3. Develop and strengthen the motivation to write in a systematic manner

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Imagine a student who has to write an essay for a course they are studying. The student has been given a topic and told to write a short essay of around 1000 words. A few hours before the submission, they begin writing. As the clock nears the deadline, the student speeds up, unthinkingly writes whatever comes to his/her head, and even decides to plagiarise some content from an internet source. A few days later, the student receives a low score for the assignment.

This scenario may not seem very surprising or unpredictable. You may have seen it happening to many around you. Across schools and colleges, we find students scrambling to write assignments at the last minute, desperately copying and plagiarising content, and not having an intellectually satisfying experience as they write assignments. Should we necessarily blame students for this situation? We tend to say that the student has not put in the required effort, but if we think about it, the problem goes much deeper.

The problem is with how we approach writing an assignment or essay. Across schools and colleges, we tend to approach writing as an activity that has to be completed as a single task. However, writing is not just one task. It is made up of many smaller tasks, happening both consciously and unconsciously. When we do not value and recognise the smaller tasks, which go into the writing of a piece, we may end up feeling overwhelmed. Instead, if we follow a

step-by-step process, it makes the act of writing more systematic and ensures we have enough time to think about and assess the quality of our own writing.

Moreover, we may tend to think of writing as a ‘product’. When students are asked to write an assignment, they are thinking of the final product that has to be submitted, not the ‘process’ through which one creates and develops the piece of writing. As a result, many resort to copying an existing model or template of writing rather than going on a creative journey to produce an original piece of writing. This creates a dependence on the template or formula that one has to follow, instead of learning to develop one’s original thoughts and arguments. Writing is essentially a creative exercise--through the act of writing, we aim to create, develop, and refine our thinking. The process approach becomes a suitable model to do the same.

In the next section, we will further elaborate on the difference between these two approaches to writing: process vs product.

Check your progress 1:

Reflect on the following questions and jot down the responses:

Have you ever submitted an assignment at the last minute? Were you satisfied with your assignment? What were the reasons for doing the work at the last minute? Do you think the assignment could have been done in a better way?

2.2 PROCESS VS PRODUCT

What do we mean by the word ‘process’? Process would typically refer to a set of steps or tasks that lead towards the execution of an activity. As you are reading this unit, can you think of what the process for producing this unit could be? Creating this unit required at least four steps: first identifying the theme, planning the sections of the unit, preparing a broad outline for the different ideas and arguments to be mentioned, and finally writing the unit over a few days. Similarly, whether you’re planning a presentation or teaching a class, you would need to think of a sequence of steps to properly execute the activity. In other words, you will need to plan, prepare, get feedback, revise, and develop the activity.

Task 1: Imagine you have to do a classroom presentation to discuss and review the ideas in the National Education Policy 2020. Make a list of at least ten steps you have to go through in order to do this presentation. These steps can include activities/tasks such as finding a copy of the policy document online, reading the policy document, jotting down summaries of the ideas you consider important, evaluating the arguments, preparing an outline for your presentation, gathering the relevant data to support your viewpoints, and more. Each of these tasks can be further fine-tuned and divided into more sub-tasks. It is up to you how detailed you want the process to be, but the more you detail, the more you will be in control of the presentation.

When we talk about the process approach to writing, we are referring to a combination of tasks, including pre-writing exercises, writing across drafts, editing and revising. However,

when we talk about the product approach, we typically think of modelling our writing on a pre-existing template. There is more emphasis, and even anxiety, about getting the format right. While we do need to care about the format to some extent, it is a problem when it becomes the most important consideration. The format or template gives us a sense of the skeletal structure of what we have to write, but it might not help us evaluate the content. For example, when we have to write a letter to a bank, it is useful to know the format of a formal or official letter, but it will not help us effectively communicate our content. That will depend on our ability to use the right words, logically transition from one idea to another, and write coherent paragraphs.

Task 2: Try to make sense of the following extract from a legal judgment in the Himachal Pradesh high court:

"However, the learned counsel...cannot derive the fullest succour from the aforesaid acquiescence... given its sinew suffering partial dissipation from an imminent display occurring in the impugned pronouncement here at where within unravelments are held qua the rendition recorded by the learned Rent Controller..."

In all probability, you could not understand a word of what was being said. This was precisely what a Supreme Court bench also noted, as they set aside this judgment, stating that they could not 'comprehend the content' [Source: Times of India, 2017]. Legal writing in India frequently suffers from this problem--the language is obscure, unclear, and difficult to understand. But this problem is not just restricted to legal writing. Across professional domains, people are writing in a manner that is unclear, ineffective, and misleading. In many of these cases, the writers are trying to follow a format they think is more serious or officious. However, in the attempt to forcibly imitate a format, they are losing track of the clarity and depth of content.

When we write, we do need to eventually create a good 'product', but it has to be prepared through a 'process'. In the next section, we will think about some of the advantages of the process approach to writing.

2.3 ADVANTAGES OF THE PROCESS APPROACH

There are three primary advantages of the process approach in writing. First, it helps one 'develop' their ideas rather than having to present them at one go. Second, it helps one tackle multiple requirements of a piece of writing. And third, it helps one learn the importance of evaluation and feedback in producing a refined piece of writing. Let's briefly discuss each of the points.

- a) **Development:** Think of any skill you have learned, whether it is a dance step, cooking, or a language that you can speak. You did not learn the skill at one go; instead, you slowly *developed* your skill. All learning develops over time, through practise and evaluation. If you cook a dish, you might get feedback from others whether some ingredients are missing or realise it yourself, and then try to improve accordingly. After cooking the dish a few times, you might finally perfect it.

Getting better at writing is no different. It is important to recognise that your writing is constantly developing, as you keep practising it, and keep identifying how the writing needs to be improved and updated.

Task 3: Observe the differences between the following two extracts:

Draft 1: Process writing is about writing that makes student produce a text. Students have the chance to think about what they are going to write, and go through a process to come up with the final version of the text. A process approach contrasts with the product approach, where the main idea is to reproduce another text.

Draft 2: Process writing is an approach to teaching writing that allows the teacher and the students to go through the process of producing a text together. In process writing, students have the chance to think about what they are going to write, produce drafts, revise, edit, and give and receive feedback on their work before coming up with the final version of the text. A process approach to writing contrasts with a product approach, where the main idea is to reproduce a model text. (Source: <https://www.whatiselt.com/single-post/2018/06/04/what-is-process-writing>)

You will notice that the second draft has more detailed sentences, and overall reads as a more complete and satisfying paragraph. Observe each of the additions that have been made in the second draft, to add more clarity to the ideas. Similarly, when you write your assignments, ensure that you keep editing your drafts to make the ideas more polished and nuanced.

- b) Tackling different components of writing: Any piece of writing consists of different sub-parts. For example, to be able to write this unit, the author will need to have a broad idea about what's being written, divide the unit into different sections, and be able to frame the ideas in a clear, logical manner. Further, to present the ideas in an effective manner, the sentences have to be grammatically coherent, each sentence must logically transition from one to the next, and the use of examples should illustrate the points being made. It is possible that one cannot handle all of these tasks at once.

Suppose you have to write a short essay on a topic assigned in one of your courses. You may be able to think of interesting ideas but then you may be under-confident about the clarity of your sentences. Once you identify your weakness, then you can work on it separately, write and rewrite your sentences till they become clear.

Task 4: If you had to write a 500-word essay responding to what you learned in this unit, what would the different components of your response be?

Pay attention to what is expected: it has to be a 500-word essay and it has to respond to what you have learned in the unit. To ensure that you do a good job of responding, you would want to identify what the different components of the essay will be. To do that, you might want to ask yourself the following questions:

- i) What are the main ideas in this unit?
- ii) What are the ideas that feel relevant to me?
- iii) What are my agreements and disagreements with the ideas in the unit?
- iv) How will I divide my answer across 500 words?
- v) How will I introduce and conclude the essay?
- vi) What will be the tone of my response?
- vii) How much time will I give myself to edit and revise the essay?

You may wish to ask even more questions. But the idea is that these questions will help you identify the specific tasks you need to think through and address as you work on the overall essay. The process approach helps you systematically prepare for and tackle each of these components one by one, so that you do not overlook or neglect any one component.

c) Feedback: A piece of writing properly develops only if the quality of writing is evaluated. There are two ways in which one can evaluate. The first approach can be called self-evaluation: here, the person who has written the piece, learns to critically re-read the piece. The second approach requires someone else--either a peer or a teacher--to go through the piece and offer feedback. In both cases, the feedback is offered on the basis of certain criteria, so it is also important to be clear about what the criteria could be for different writing assignments.

The criteria for feedback would depend on the type of writing that is being evaluated. For example, if you are assessing a summary of a book, you may want to think of whether the ideas in the book have been accurately described and whether the summary has been written in a clear, precise manner. If you are assessing a review of a book, you will also need to think about the quality of argumentation and the range of themes that have been mentioned. In other words, based on the type or genre of writing, you think of particular parameters through which the writing can be assessed.

It is always desirable to get feedback from others, from a teacher or even your peers. This will help you understand how other readers experience your writing. Each reader will bring a fresh set of perspectives--this will help you understand how to write in a manner that can appeal to the largest number of readers. Further, you might not be able to detect issues in your own writing unless it is pointed out by others. This does not mean that you should not self-evaluate, but your own ability to evaluate will grow if you have conversations with others.

Unfortunately, across schools and colleges, we often feel cagey or defensive about our own writing. We do not usually show our writing to others, to get feedback. The feedback we get may not be constructive too. The process approach tackles this problem by making writing a step-by-step process. You do not need to write a perfect first draft; instead, you improve it over time, by seeking constructive feedback.

2.4 THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE PROCESS APPROACH

In this section, we will discuss how to practically design a process approach to writing. The process approach can be divided into three stages: pre-writing; writing; and editing. In the pre-writing stage, we prepare the ground to carry out the writing assignment. We think of possible ideas to explore, we discuss the ideas with others, we organise the ideas in a sequence or a plot, and then we begin writing. In the writing stage, we finally begin the process of writing. However, there could be different approaches to how one goes about the writing process. Some might prefer to write in a flow, others may wish to write in short spurts spread out over time. The third stage is editing, where the writer reviews and revises the piece of writing. All of the three stages are interconnected in many ways and might even overlap at certain points, especially the second and third stage. However, it is useful to consider them

separately and learn a few techniques and exercises through which one can go through each of the stages.

In the next part of this section, we will look at each of the components of the process approach.

2.4.1 The Pre-writing Stage

Imagine that you have to play the final match of a cricket tournament. Suppose you are the captain of your team, and people are expecting you to deliver. Now given the responsibility you have to carry, you cannot simply go into the match without any preparation. You would need to train hard, ensure that your fitness is up to the mark, motivate your teammates, and also study the tactics of your opponent. In other words, a considerable amount of time and effort has to go into preparing for the match, if you wish to have an edge over the other team.

Writing is definitely different from cricket. But whether you will perform well as you write will definitely depend on the level of your preparation. What you do before writing is as important, if not more, as what you do while writing. The pre-writing stage can further be broken down into three sub-components: ideation, discussion, and organisation.

- a) Ideation is simply the act of coming up with ideas. Now while you may be getting ideas all the time, finding relevant ideas for writing requires a focussed approach. Ideation can be quite a dynamic process and it might take you a few days to come up with ideas you feel confident or convinced about. While ideation in everyday conversations is usually quite open-ended, it can be useful to break it down into the following steps:

Step 1: Jot down what you know about the topic.

The very first step of ideation is to recognise and jot down what you know already. You may know a few things about a topic from your own experience and what you have read already. Alternately, you can just jot down a few words or phrases that you associate with the topic. This will also help you recognise what you do not know or the gaps in your knowledge which you have to fill by reading more.

Step 2: Reading and researching.

This step is absolutely crucial. You will have to read in order to develop your understanding of a topic. If you are writing an assignment for a course, you will obviously read what is prescribed in your course, but it is also important to find resources beyond your prescribed reading and enhance your understanding. To find essays and books relevant to your topic, you will need to ask relevant experts for suggestions and also search for readings on online search engines and databases.

Step 3: Noting down the ideas you get from reading and researching.

After having read, there are many more ideas that you will develop. Note down these ideas as you read and even after you finish reading. You still might feel that you need to read more (there's no end to it, really!) but for practical purposes, you have to decide how much you

want to read depending on the scope of the assignment. You might also want to note down any arguments that you have come across in your reading.

After having developed some preliminary ideas about the topic, it is useful to discuss these ideas with others and reflect on them. This takes us to the next part of the prewriting stage.

b) **Discussing the ideas:** After you note down your initial ideas, it is crucial that you discuss them with someone, preferably a peer or a teacher. Without dialogue with another person, it is difficult to develop your perspectives on what you know and think. Talking to someone will help you compare and contrast your viewpoints with other perspectives, and fine-tune your ideas accordingly. We tend to think of thinking and reflection as more isolated activities, but this is a rather misleading assumption. All ideas, in fact, develop through conversation and dialogue. Think of any field of research--as more and more people have conversations about specific themes, the knowledge grows and updates itself. However, as you discuss your ideas, there are a few issues to keep in mind.

First, do not approach a discussion as if it is a monologue, as if you are merely announcing a topic to another person. In the discussion, ask questions such as ‘What do you think of my idea?’ or ‘Do you disagree with anything I’m saying?’ to invite more critical feedback. At the same time, do not approach a discussion with passivity, as if the other person's ideas are more important than yours. You are discussing your ideas with someone to gain a comparative perspective, but ultimately you are the one making the final judgments regarding the value of your idea. The point of a discussion is to identify various loopholes, inconsistencies, and gaps in your thinking, and to identify areas where you need to improve your ideation.

c) **Organising:** After you have discussed and fine-tuned your ideas a little more, it’s useful to organise the ideas before you begin to write. Through the ideation and discussion process, you may have taken lots of notes but in no particular order or sequence. Now it may be a bit overwhelming to begin writing with a fat stack of notes but little sense of how you want to arrange them. Organising is simply reconstructing and arranging your ideas in a manner that helps you effectively write the assignment. There are two components to organising:

i) **Reconstructing the notes:** If you have gathered extensive notes and you are finding it difficult to go through them all at once, it might help to reconstruct them a little bit. From all the notes that you have gathered, identify the ones you think are the most useful for your essay and connect the ones that you think are closely linked. Now write them out in short bullet points, in as concise a manner as possible. This will help you keep track of your notes as you write the essay. However, this exercise is only necessary when you have a lot of notes to begin with.

ii) **Writing a plot outline:** Think of any film that you have watched. If you had to summarise the film to a friend, you would be briefly describing the plot of the film. The plot outline is simply the sequential summary of the ideas and arguments that make up any text. Now based on your ideas and the notes you have taken, it will be useful to list out a set of bullet points on how you will sequence the ideas in your essay. This exercise will help you keep track of the connections and transitions in your narrative, and ensure that you don’t randomly jump from one idea to another.

Task 5: Suppose you had to write a short 500-word essay on the problems with competitive examinations in India. Your plot outline could look something like this:

Plot outline:

Begin with a description of common problems faced by students while writing exams (100 words)



Identify and introduce 2 problems that are the most important. For example, student anxiety (problem 1) and unequal access to resources (problem 2). (50 words)



Briefly describe problem 1 with an example (150 words)



Briefly describe problem 2 with an example (150 words)



Conclude by mentioning the need for change (50 words)

Now the above plot outline is one example out of many. The same essay can be written in very different ways, depending on your subjective preferences. Also, you may choose to deviate from the plot outline while writing since you may get more compelling ideas while writing. However, preparing an outline will help you control your writing much better, especially when you are writing assignments within strict deadlines and with limited word count. It also helps you plan the transitions in your writing more effectively.

2.4.2 The Writing Stage

What you need to do in the writing stage seems fairly obvious: you just need to write. However, as you must realise, there is some writing that has already happened before you have even begun to formally write the assignment. You have taken notes, organised them, and even arranged them in a plot outline. Now you will get to the actual writing, so to speak. You will weave the threads of your thought, you will craft a story, you will develop your argument. But is it so easy to *just* write?

There are many who struggle to write, not because they cannot, but because they do not always know how to deal with the anxieties of writing. There are a few obstacles that are commonly experienced by many people who have to write, including professional writers sometimes! Here is a list of how to address each of these problems and anxieties during the writing process:

a) Starting trouble: Many people find it difficult to begin writing a piece, even after having extensively prepared. The perfect first sentence refuses to come, or there is a fair amount of self-doubt about how to connect the arguments in the essay. Now writing, like any other activity, is something one gets better at by just doing more of it. It's possible that the first few sentences may be rusty or slightly awkward, but as you keep writing, it begins to flow. And you can always come back to the introduction and rewrite it!

A good way to challenge the inertia to begin writing is by practising 'freewriting'. Freewriting simply means that you write whatever comes to your head, without thinking or reflecting on it.

Task 6: Suppose you have to write an assignment on the advantages of the process approach. You are sitting with your pen, or in front of your computer, but the words do not seem to be coming to you. You are feeling increasingly anxious and are ready to give up. Instead, you

decide to write whatever comes to your head in a flow, without thinking too much and suppose you end up writing something like this:

‘I don’t know what I’m writing, I don’t know what I have to write, I’m sitting for two hours but the words don’t come. I’m thinking of everything but the process approach, I’m thinking of the latest film songs, I want to listen to them again and again. I’m thinking of what movie to watch but wait, come back to the assignment. What is the process approach? How do I exactly think about it? Is it like a step-by step sequence of something more? Does it really help? I don’t know, I’m thinking...’

Now what you have written are just the thoughts on the top of your head. But in the process of writing them out, you are essentially unclogging your writing block. You are allowing the words to flow bit by bit, and once you start feeling more comfortable, then you should begin formally writing the essay. The freewriting exercise is like a warm-up--just as you warm-up by running and stretching before playing a sport, freewriting helps you warm up before you begin writing an assignment.

b) Getting distracted and bad time management: One of the problems faced by a lot of people is that they don’t write at a stretch. They begin writing, but after around 15-20 minutes, decide to do something else. In the process, they keep losing their focus and so the assignment ends up being rather patchy and incoherent. To avoid this, you should always schedule your writing effectively. Try to ensure that you write for at least 30-45 minutes at a stretch. Even if you take breaks, take short 5-minute breaks and get back to writing. You may wish to spread out your writing over a few days, but try to ensure you work equally everyday rather than pile up your work so that you have to finish it at the last minute. Good time management ensures good writing.

c) Feeling incoherent: Another frequent problem you may face is that you feel that you can’t connect the ideas and arguments effectively, and you may seem to be jumping from one idea to the next. Now if you have planned and prepared well, this should not be such a big problem. But if the problem still persists, then it is important to not lose hope and give up. It’s more practically useful to finish writing the first draft and then begin editing the paper with a fresh mind. This brings us to the final stage of the writing process, editing.

2.4.3 The Editing and Revising Stage

The editing stage should typically be preceded by a feedback session. It’s necessary to get feedback on your first draft, from teachers, peers, or subject experts. Once you get feedback, you will have more clarity about the gaps and issues in your writing. The editing stage should be given as much priority as the previous two stages. After the first draft is ready, you can revise the drafts as many times as you wish--there can be a second, third, or even a fourth draft! The more drafts you work on, the more polished your writing will be.

While editing is a rather dynamic process, it is useful to keep in mind certain parameters while editing: namely, comprehension, development, and writing mechanics. Comprehension refers to whether you have accurately understood the assignment and whatever you have read/researched. Development refers to whether the arguments have been shaped logically, whether sentences and paragraphs transition effectively from one to the next. Finally, writing mechanics refers to whether the writing is grammatically coherent and whether the best vocabulary has been used to capture and convey ideas.

Check your progress 2

Read the following extract and think of how you would edit it. Think through the following questions: Has the extract understood or comprehended the argument about process and product approach? Do the sentences transition effectively and logically from one to the next? Are the sentences grammatically coherent?

‘When planning to use process approach, think about text students will be asked produce. If learners need to write narrative focusing on ideas first might be a good choice. Genre conventions are very fixed, like in e-mails, formal letters, or reports, product approach to writing might be more suitable.’

2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we learned about the difference between process and product approach to writing and the advantages of the process approach. We learned about the different stages and components of the process approach, and learned a set of techniques and exercises to prepare, organise, write, and edit writing assignments.

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*. Oxford University Press, 1973.

Internet Resources:

<https://writingprocess.mit.edu/>

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/141876629.pdf>

2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress 1: Write the answer in your own words.

Check your progress 2:

A possible revision can be this extract:

When planning to use a process approach to writing, however, it is important to think about what type of text - or textual genre - the students will be asked to produce. If learners need to write a narrative, an article or an essay, focusing on ideas first might be a good choice.

However, if the genre conventions are very fixed, like in e-mails, formal letters, or reports, a product approach to writing might be more suitable. (source:

<https://www.whatiselt.com/single-post/2018/06/04/what-is-process-writing>)

UNIT 3 ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC WRITING

STRUCTURE

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 What is writing and why have humans evolved this trait over millennia?
 - 3.2.1 Writing helps us produce, record, and share our thoughts
 - 3.2.2 Writing helps connect people and enables them to do things in the world
- 3.3 Different types of writing in the world
- 3.4 What is Academic writing?
 - 3.4.1: Knowledge Production
 - 3.4.2: Knowledge Sharing
 - 3.4.1: Sharing with academics (researchers, teachers, students)
 - 3.4.2: Sharing with general public
- 3.5 Why is academic writing useful for you?
- 3.6 Looking Back, Looking Ahead
- 3.7 What does academic writing contain?
 - 3.7.1 Arguments
 - 3.7.2 Structure of an argument
 - 3.7.3 Difference between arguments and opinions
- 3.8 Issues of accessibility and diversity in academic writing
- 3.9 Let us sum up
- 3.10 Suggested Readings
- 3.11 Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to:

- Help you find answers to some basic questions about academic writing:
- What is academic writing?
- What does it contain?
- What does it do in the world?
- Explain what academic writing can help you achieve in the world.
- Motivate you to pursue academic writing.
- Address any confusions or anxieties that you may have about academic writing.
- .

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we begin, please write down all the words or thoughts that come to your mind when you read the words “academic writing” in the blank space below:

Academic writing can often seem to be difficult, complicated, scary, boring and useless when we do not understand what it is, what it can help us achieve in the world, and how to do it. At many times in your own life, you might have felt scared at the thought of writing an academic assignment or giving an exam. All of this usually happens because we are rarely ever taught academic writing in school or colleges which leaves a lot of doubts and worries in our mind. This chapter will help change that by making you feel more comfortable with the idea of academic writing and by dispelling any doubts or anxieties that you might have had about what it is, how to do it, or why to do it.

So, let's get started!

3.2 WHAT IS WRITING AND WHY HAVE HUMANS EVOLVED THIS TRAIT OVER MILLENNIA?

Before we get to the topic of academic writing, let us begin by first understanding what this thing called “writing” really is. Let's do so by asking ourselves two simple, but big and profound questions. **What is writing? Why do you think the human species has evolved this trait of writing over thousands of years?**

Writing has been central to the expansion of human species because **it is a technology that helps us do two interconnected things:**

- A. **it helps us produce, record, and share our thoughts**
- B. **it connects a large group of people together and enables them to *do things* together.**
- C.

3.2.1 Writing helps us produce, record, and share our thoughts

Let's look at the first part of this definition first. Writing: A technology that helps us produce, record and share our thoughts. It might seem odd to think of writing as a technology like mobile phones or computers, but writing is in fact one of the first and perhaps the most important technologies that humans have invented. This technology helps us produce elaborate thoughts, record them and share them with other people. While spoken language can do this to some extent too, it is difficult to store for a long duration and pass on to other people over large distances. The number of ideas that we can produce with speech is also limited. Writing helps overcome these limitations of spoken language by helping us produce a very large number of thoughts, record them permanently and send them to other people over large distances.

Think about it like this — when we have thoughts in our mind, using writing, we can code them into a few scribbles on paper and then transmit them to people thousands of kilometres away who can then decode those scribbles back into thoughts in their minds and understand what we were thinking about and then send us their own thoughts through the same process. Isn't that an almost magical technology?! In fact, right now, when you are reading this book, that is exactly what is happening. My thoughts have been converted into scribbles on this paper, which you are reading and decoding in your minds! I am able to share my thoughts with you using the technology of writing.

3.2.2 Writing *connects* a large group of people together and enables them to *do things* together

Now let's look at the second part of this definition. Writing: Something that *connects* different groups of people and enables them to *do things* in the world. Think about the last time you did some writing. What did you write? Where did you write it? Who was it written for? What purpose did the writing serve? Let's suppose that the very last thing you wrote was a text message to your friend, wishing her happy birthday. In doing this, you recorded your thoughts and shared it with your friend. By this act, you *connected* with your friend and you also *did something in the world* — you made your friend feel special, and strengthened the bonds of your friendship. Just like this, each time anyone writes anything in the world, i.e. each time they record their thoughts and share them with someone using the technology of writing, they end up *connecting* with someone else and they end up *doing* something in the world! Even when we write something for ourselves, like a personal note, we are *connecting* with our own selves and *doing something* — reflecting on something that happened, or reminding ourselves to do something in the future.

3.3 DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF WRITING

Over the centuries, various categories of writings have emerged which include specialized kinds of writing that *connect* different kinds of people together and enable them to *do* different things in the world. An example would be legal writing — which includes specialized kinds of writings like affidavits, writ petitions, legal briefs etc. that connect lawyers, clients, and judges and enables them to do legal work together. Another example could be media writing, which includes specialized kinds of writing like radio scripts, newspapers, film writing, magazines etc. that helps connect media writers, artists, and journalists with common people in order to inform, educate, and entertain them. Yet another example is professional writing which includes employers and employees in corporate work spaces who use specialized forms of writing like emails, CVs, cover letters, project reports, emails, applications etc. to connect with each other and achieve the goals of the companies that they work in. Finally, there is also academic writing which includes specialized kinds of writings like research papers, books, assignments, exams etc. and connects students, teachers, and researchers and enables them to do a special kind of work called academic work. This work includes the work of research in the form of knowledge production and knowledge distribution — something that we will talk about in detail in the next section.

SOME EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF WRITING				
Category	Legal Writing	Media Writing	Professional Writing	Academic Writing
Which specialized forms of writing does it contain?	Affidavits, writ petitions, legal briefs etc.	Radio scripts, newspapers, film writing, magazines etc.	CVs, cover letters, project reports, applications, emails etc.	Research papers, assignments, exams, books etc.
What kind of people does it connect?	Lawyers, clients, judges etc.	Media writers, artists, journalists	Employers and employees of a company	Students, teachers, researchers etc.
What work does it enable them to do?	Filing and resolving of lawsuits	Educating, informing, and entertaining the public	Achieving the goals of the company that they work in	Knowledge production and knowledge sharing

Looking out the window: Before reading further, try to look outside the window and think about what you’ve just read. Reflecting about what you are reading is a very important part of the learning process. Remember how we defined reflection in Block 1, Unit 1? There we had said that reflection refers to “the act of introspecting about what you read and observe. It involves asking how and why things happen the way they do and cultivating a deeper engagement with what we read and observe.” What do you think about what you’ve just read? Does it make sense? Do you have any thoughts to add? Write down your thoughts here:

3.4 WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Now that we have set up the basic groundwork about what writing is and what it helps humans do in the world, we can now move on to the main question that we need to address in this unit — What is academic writing?

Quite simply put:

Academic writing is a form of writing that

- **connects academicians (researchers, teachers, students)**
- **to do**
- **knowledge production**
- **knowledge sharing**

Academic writing is the kind of writing that helps connect academic people and enables them to do academic work together. You may ask now, who are academic people and what is this academic work that they do? Academic people or academicians are researchers, teachers, and

students who work in specialized academic or educational settings like schools, colleges, research laboratories and other academic organizations like think tanks. The main work that they perform is: a) knowledge production & b) knowledge sharing

Let us go deeper now into these two functions that academic writing performs.

3.4.1 Knowledge Production

Our world is full of mysteries — whether it be the smallest of atoms, or the largest of galaxies, or whether it is the ways in which humans organize themselves into societies to do all sorts of things — there are so many things that we don't fully understand and research is the systematic attempt to analyse and understand the mysteries around us in order to make them meaningful and, in some cases, also useful for the human species. Researchers or academicians' study different aspects of the world around us using unique tools and methods in order to produce knowledge that impacts the world. Academic writing is an integral part of these tools and methods. At all stages of the research or knowledge production process, academics use different kinds of specialized writing, for example note-taking, summarizing, mind-mapping, and diagramming are some of the writing tools that help researchers develop their ideas.

3.4.2 Knowledge Sharing

Once knowledge is produced, academic people share it with other people. Over time, through this process of sharing, ideas evolve and grow based on the needs of the societies in which they exist. This sharing is usually of two types and academic writing helps in both of them:

3.4.2.1 Sharing with academics (researchers, teachers, students)

This sharing helps to improve the quality of knowledge produced as more and more people are able to help refine the ideas by sharing their thoughts, feedback and perspectives on them. Usually when a researcher is content about the quality of an idea that they have produced, they write it in the form of a research paper and submit it to special kinds of magazines called academic journals. All academic disciplines or subjects like physics, literature, philosophy, sociology, economics etc. have many academic journals which are like magazines which periodically publish academic papers. Each journal has editors or senior academicians who select whether the paper is of good quality and if they decide that it is indeed of good quality, then they publish that paper in their journal. If the idea is not good, or requires more work, then the editors of the journal will send it back to the authors with feedback on how to improve their research. Once a research paper has been published, other scholars who are also interested in that topic start conducting more research on it in order to refine or improve the original idea and gradually, once enough people have conducted research on it and agreed that it makes sense, it becomes part of the commonly accepted knowledge of an academic discipline or subject. Among these ideas, whatever seems more useful or relevant for the future generation is then written down in textbooks and is studied by students like you who then go on to write their own assignments, notes, and exam papers (all of which are also examples of academic writing) to improve their learning of those ideas and also to gradually develop their own perspectives on them so they can help improve those ideas in the future.

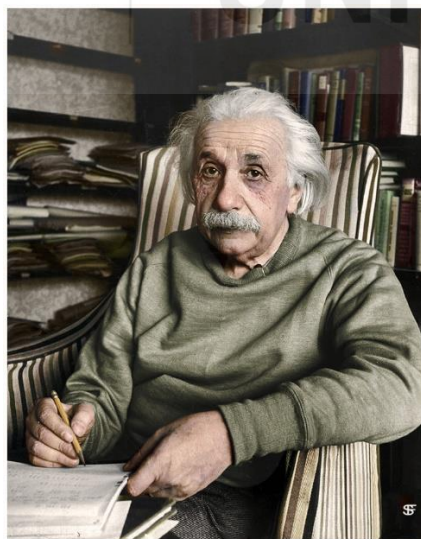
3.4.2.2 Sharing with the general public

This sharing helps to educate people who might not know anything about those ideas and also helps them engage with ideas even if they do not have the privilege to become an academic. This sharing can happen in the form of educational tv and radio shows, or through websites on the internet like Wikipedia and YouTube, or more recently even through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram.

An example to illustrate all these ideas about academic writing

You must have heard about the Nobel Prize. The Nobel Prize is one of the most prestigious academic prizes that is given each year to individuals who conduct research in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Economics, Medicine and Literature, that brings the most amount of benefit to the human species. In the year 1921, the famous scientist Albert Einstein was given the Nobel Prize for his ground-breaking research in physics on something called the “photoelectric effect” which helped people better understand the mysteries of how light operates and how it can be used to produce electrical energy. Einstein’s understanding of the mysteries of light helped to produce a wide range of applications including but not limited to solar cells, photocopy machines, street lights, lasers, remote control televisions, and even broadband internet which we all use so much these days! To achieve all this, Einstein did a lot of academic writing. While exploring the properties of light in his laboratory, he took study notes, and wrote down a lot of laboratory reports as he conducted experiments. He also solved a lot of mathematical equations in his writing. All of these were the tools and methods of research that he used and academic writing helped him in all these processes. Once he was convinced that he had uncovered the mysteries of light, he started publishing his results as academic research papers in academic journals. Einstein’s research papers, which consisted of explanations, descriptions, analysis, and interpretations of his research on light were then read by a lot of other physicists and engineers across the world through his research publications in academic journals, and they started to respond to his work by conducting their own research inspired from it and then publishing it in other research journals.

Albert Einstein



(Source www.flickr.com)

If you go to a website called **Google Scholar** (scholar.google.co.in), you will see that Einstein's research papers have been *cited* thousands of times! A citation is basically when an academician shares another academician's research paper in their own research. What that means is that other people have conducted their own research and published their own research papers on light, by using Einstein's work and his research paper as the foundation of their research. The research done by all these scientists confirmed some of Einstein's ideas and criticised other parts of them, and through this process, they helped to develop or evolve his ideas further, as a large body of people started experimenting, analysing, and thinking about the photoelectric effect to improve our collective understanding of this concept. Through all these *connections* and the *doing* of research work by a wide range of physicists over the last 100 years starting from Einstein, the human species has not only understood many of the mysteries associated with the phenomenon of light, but also applied those understandings to produce a lot of technology that has improved the ways in which we live! Isn't that amazing? Over the years, once this concept of photoelectric effect was well established, it started getting written about in textbooks of Science and Physics and students like you read about it and write assignments or exam answers on this topic. In fact, some of you might have read about the photoelectric effect in school if you had science and you might even have answered exam questions about it. Furthermore, popular YouTube videos and Wikipedia articles also explain this concept now, so that interested members of the general public can also learn about it. Academic writing has been central to making all of this happen through both knowledge production and sharing and that is why it is so important.

Activity 1: Go to the website scholar.google.co.in. This is a great website for searching through academic papers on any topic that has been published in the world. There, in the search box, type in anything that interests you. It could be anything that you find to be mysterious; something that you'd like to know more about. For example, you could search for topics like "pollution, gender, black holes, demonetization, theatre, agricultural policy, social justice, capitalism etc.". You can type in any other topics you want too. Once you press enter, you will see many academic research papers that have been published on that particular topic. Click on any of those papers to see how academic writing and research is done about that particular topic. Keep browsing this website to become more familiar with what academic research papers look like. At the bottom of each paper, you will see a tab called "Cited by" followed by a number. This refers to the many people who *connected* with the paper and *did* their own research inspired by it. If you click that, you will be taken to all their academic papers and you can also browse through them! If you pay attention, you will also see the names of all the academic journals or books where these papers have been published. Try to make a list of at least three academic papers or books related to topics that you are interested in and write them down here:

Activity 2: Using the Time Machine: Let's go back in time. Think about all the subjects that you studied in class 6. What all were they? Did you have Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, and language subjects (like English, Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Assamese, Bangla etc.)? Do you remember reading the textbooks for all these subjects? Each of these subjects is

actually an academic discipline which consists of many researchers spread out across the world. Those researchers conduct research on different mysteries in their field that interest them and once they are satisfied with the results of their research, it gets published in research journals, and if it gets widely accepted by other researchers or scholars in their field, then it gets transmitted to the wider community of students in the form of textbooks. Everything that you read in your Science, Social Science, Mathematics, and language books in Class 6 (or any other class), was originally the result of research carried out by researchers in these academic fields! Let me give you an example. In the History section of your Social Studies books, do you remember reading about Emperor Ashoka who created the magnificent Ashokan empire but then had a change of heart after watching so much suffering and violence in his wars and ultimately adopted Buddhism to spread the message of peace across the world? Ashoka is a very significant part of Indian history and has played an important role in helping Indians understand their heritage and past. However, we might have never known about him if many researchers in the field of history like James Princep and Nayanjot Lahiri had not done very important research that has helped us better understand Ashoka, his life, his history, and the impact of his work in shaping the Indian subcontinent. They produced a lot of knowledge about him and then shared it with academicians as well as the general public which has made Emperor Ashoka an important chapter in Indian history textbooks. Similarly, if you start looking back at everything in all your school textbooks, you will see that everything in them is a result of research and exploration carried out by different academicians in various academic disciplines which you studied in the form of chapters in your subject based textbooks! Isn't that amazing?!

3.5 WHY IS ACADEMIC WRITING USEFUL FOR YOU?

At this point, you might ask, what does academic writing have to do with me? Well, the answer to that is that **by doing academic writing, you develop the ability to think critically and communicate effectively, both of which are essential skills for the modern world, no matter what you do in life.**

By doing academic writing, when you learn how to produce knowledge, you develop the ability to think critically, and when you learn how to share knowledge, you develop the ability to communicate effectively. Both these skills will be very useful to you both as students in a college, as well as someone who works in a professional job later on.

As a college student, no matter which subjects you are enrolled in, you are being trained to be able to both produce as well as share knowledge. You are being trained to both understand the world of ideas and research, as well as to gradually develop your own ideas for research. Thus, any kind of college study requires many different types of academic reading and writing. As you go through your courses, you will be *connecting* with the thoughts of scholars and thinkers from your disciplinary communities (by way of reading about them or their works) and by writing assignments, exam answers, essays, final projects, reports, dissertations and many other things. You are *doing* something important — entering into a conversation with these scholars by understanding their ideas and gradually developing your own ideas which may agree or disagree with them through sound reasoning and research. To do all this, you will be summarizing, describing, explaining, narrating, analyzing, interpreting, critiquing, arguing and applying their works in the kinds of writings that you do. By doing this, you will bring fresh perspectives and thoughts to the problems and mysteries that the researchers in your academic disciplines have been pursuing. If you continue to delve deeper into your academic disciplines by pursuing postgraduate degrees, then you will be

using these skills to pursue mysteries of your own and enhance the human species' knowledge about them!

However, even if you decide to take up other pursuits outside of the academic world after your undergraduate degree, all the skills that you pick up while learning about academic writing — summarizing, describing, explaining, narrating, analyzing, interpreting, critiquing, arguing and applying etc. — will all come in handy in various professional and social situations that you might work at in the future as all these skills help you develop the faculties of critical thinking (knowledge production) and effective communication (knowledge sharing) which are essential for the modern world.

3.6 LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

By now, we have developed a good understanding of what academic writing is. We know that it is a technology that helps to connect academic people (students, teachers, researchers) and enables them to do two primary things: a) knowledge production; b) knowledge sharing. We also now know that for students it can be particularly helpful to learn how to do academic writing because it helps them develop the skills of critical thinking and effective communication which are very important in the modern world, no matter what you choose to do. Finally, before we reach the end of this unit, we need to answer a very important final question, what does academic writing contain exactly? Or, what is the main ingredient that goes into making academic writing?

3.7 WHAT DOES ACADEMIC WRITING CONTAIN?

3.7.1 Arguments

The main ingredient that makes up all academic writing is called an “argument” which is any writing or speech where the author puts forth a point or idea and gives supporting evidence and reasons for their ideas, in order to try and convince their audience about the correctness, importance, and significance of their idea.

An Argument

- **Contains:**
- **Idea (Main point or claim)**
- **Evidence (Data)**
- **Reasons (Explanation of the data, or your explanation of how the data connects to your main point):**
- **Tries to: convince people about the correctness, importance, and significance of the idea contained within it.**

An example: You all are already familiar with the act of arguing even if you don't know much about the particular word “argument”. For example, when you wanted to enroll in an undergraduate degree programme, you might have had to argue your case with your parents and friends or family about the subject that you wanted to choose. Someone might have asked you, why do you want to take the subject that you have taken? The answer that you gave them was an argument if you presented a point or idea with reasoning and evidence in order to try and convince them about the correctness, importance and value of your idea. Your

main idea in that case would have probably been something like “I want to go to IGNOU to get a Bachelor’s Degree in XYZ subject”. To support it, you might have given evidence or data like “students who get a college education in this subject have 90% more chance of getting a good job, than just class 12 pass outs” and further given reasons like “by going to college, my chances of getting a job will increase”.

3.7.2 Structure of an Argument

In terms of structure, we can say that an argument consists of a main idea, evidence and reasoning. In terms of the argument made in the example above, we can say that it consists of the following structure:

- **Idea (Main Point):** I want to go to IGNOU to get a Bachelor’s Degree in XYZ subject
- **Evidence (Data):** Students who get a college education have 90% more chance of getting a job, than just class 12 passouts.
- **Reasoning (Your explanation of the data, or your explanation of how the data connects to your main point):** By going to college, my chances of getting a job will increase---

3.7.3 Difference between arguments and opinions

In our daily lives, when we argue with our friends and families, we generally just give statements or ideas that do not necessarily have very detailed or rigorous evidence and reasoning. That is called an opinion. If you have ever been to a *chai* shop, you might have heard lots of people arguing about politics. They might have said that a particular politician is not good, in response to which someone else might have said ‘no no’ XYZ did so much good work, it is actually PQR who is horrible and corrupt, and so on and so forth...till everyone starts fighting. Usually in these kinds of discussions, people present opinions, i.e., they share their beliefs but do not give any concrete evidence or reasons for why they believe so. Academic arguments on the other hand are ideas that contain rigorous evidence and reasoning so that other academics can analyse, interpret, and critique them using their knowledge in as unbiased a manner as possible (although it is difficult even for academics to be completely unbiased). By doing so, academic people seek to continuously improve the nature of knowledge about the mysteries in their field so that they can strive to reach ever closer to truths in their fields.

Check your progress 1

Look at the following statements. Try to find out which of them are academic arguments and which of them are just opinions. To decide this, try to underline and mark which of the statements have ideas, evidence, as well as reasoning. If they have all three, then it is an argument. However, if one or more elements are missing then it is an opinion only. The first few have been done for you as examples.

1. The state of Haryana needs public education programs to reduce discrimination against women. The gender ratio in the state is still close to 914/1000 i.e., for every 1000 boys, Haryana has only 914 girls. This shows that parents in Haryana feel more inclined to have boys as children rather than girls, which is causing a gender imbalance and discrimination against women. Education programs can help reduce some of the harmful

beliefs of parents about gender.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:** The state of Haryana needs public education programs to reduce discrimination against women.
 - b. **Evidence:** The gender ratio in the state is still close to 914/1000 i.e., for every 1000 boys, Haryana has only 914 girls.
 - c. **Reasoning:** This shows that parents in Haryana feel more inclined to have boys as children rather than girls, which is causing a gender imbalance and discrimination against women.
 - d. **Conclusion:** Since idea, evidence, and reasoning are all present, hence we can say that this is an academic argument. Education programs can help reduce some of the harmful beliefs of parents about gender.
2. In my village, soft drink X sells more than Y, because a film actor advertises for X and people always buy whatever this actor advertises.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:** In my village, soft drink X sells more than Y.
 - b. **Evidence:** A film actor advertises for X.
 - c. **Reasoning:** People always buy whatever the actor advertises.
 - d. **Conclusion:** Even though idea, evidence, and reasoning are all present here and it looks like an academic argument, however, it is not a good academic argument. That is because the evidence and reasoning that has been used are not strong to support the idea. Just because an actor advertises for X and because people generally buy what he advertises for does not necessarily mean that people are buying Y less than X. We will need a lot more data from the shops in the village about how many people buy which brand of soft drink before presenting such an idea.
 - e. **Important Note:** Just because someone has given some evidence, or presented an idea in the shape of an academic argument, does not mean that it automatically becomes true. In fact, one of the main things that academics do is to analyze different arguments made by other academics and then filter out the ones where the evidence or reasoning is weak or cannot be proved. This is why, whenever we are presented with an argument, we need to question all facts and reasons that have been presented to us and look up credible sources to check their validity. You will learn more about how to do this in other Units in this book, as well as in the many subjects that you study in college.
3. It will rain today because I am feeling like it.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:** It will rain today
- b. **Evidence:** No evidence given
- c. **Reasoning:** Because I am feeling like it.
- d. **Conclusion:** Since there is no evidence given here and the reasoning is also not very strong, this is not an academic argument. This is an opinion.

4. Indian economy has improved since the policy of liberalization was implemented in the 1990s. This policy led to a great increase in the number of jobs available for common people as big multinational corporations were able to come to India and set up offices through this policy. More jobs means the economy is improving.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:**
- b. **Evidence:**
- c. **Reasoning:**
- d. **Conclusion:**

5. Yellow is a more beautiful colour than orange.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:**
- b. **Evidence:**
- c. **Reasoning:**
- d. **Conclusion:**

6. In order to stay healthy, one must try to exercise every day. Research has shown that if humans run regularly, then their hearts become strong and are able to pump blood to all their organs without any trouble. Since the heart is one of the most important organs of the body, anything that increases its strength will help make the human body healthy.

Answer:

- a. **Idea:**
- b. **Evidence:**
- c. **Reasoning:**
- d. **Conclusion:**

3.8 ISSUES OF ACCESSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING

The importance of academic writing lies in the fact that those who are able to practice and produce such writing, hold the power to mould thought and make changes in society. Individuals who are denied access to education and in turn, academic reading and writing, are prevented from exploring the chance to make a contribution leading to a better understanding of the world we live in. On the other hand, when people from groups that have traditionally been denied access to education are able to participate in knowledge making and knowledge sharing processes, our quality of collective knowledge improves as we are able to see old problems and mysteries through fresh, new perspectives which help us develop unique new understandings and solutions to them. Let me give you an example.

Historically in India, women have not been allowed for centuries to go to schools or colleges or do research. Unfortunately, this is still true in many parts of the country although there

have been some improvements over the last few years. Since women weren't allowed to participate in schools and colleges, they weren't allowed to produce knowledge or to disseminate it. What that did is that it prevented their unique perspectives from shaping our ideas about the world. However, when people's conservative mindsets began to change and when women started to enter schools and colleges, and started to conduct their own research, many of our older understandings about mysteries in many academic disciplines began to change drastically because new perspectives that had never been part of the academic world started to come in!

Have you heard the name of Anandi Gopal Joshi? She was India's first female doctor! Born in 1865, she lived at a time when women were not allowed to study medicine or become doctors. Yes, there was a time like that! Because of the absence of women in the field of medicine, women's issues weren't understood very well because all the male doctors could not really understand those issues since they had never experienced those themselves. A traumatic experience in Anandi Joshi's life changed all that.

Anandi Gopal Joshi



Source: Wikipedia.org

When she was giving birth to her first child, Joshi only had access either to female midwives (who are older women who traditionally help other women in childbirth but lack in-depth modern medical training) or male doctors (who were trained in sophisticated modern medicine but had never experienced women's health issues themselves so could not understand them well). During birth, there were medical complications but neither the midwives, nor the male doctors could understand any of them properly and due to lack of proper medical care, Anandi Joshi's child died within 10 days of being born. This was a turning moment in her life and she decided to gain education so that she could prevent other women and children from suffering similar fates. She started learning how to read and write in English and Sanskrit, and through a lot of dedicated, hard work as well as social and financial support from her family, she managed to go to the Women's College of Pennsylvania in the United States of America. In spite of a lot of social discrimination in India and attempts by conservative members of society to prevent women from studying, she graduated with a degree called MD or Doctor of Medicine (which is a postgraduate degree in the academic discipline or subject of medicine which doctors' study). For this degree, she did academic writing in the form of a research dissertation titled "Obstetrics among the Aryan Hindoos" where she analyzed both traditional Indian Ayurvedic practices as well as modern

American medical procedures in order to make arguments about how to improve obstetrical practices, or practices related to pregnancy and childbirth in India! On coming back from the USA, she was made the doctor in charge of the female ward of the Albert Edward Hospital in Kolhapur, where she revolutionized medical healthcare for women giving birth in India, and helped save many lives. All of this was made possible because someone who was traditionally not allowed to do research in academia struggled hard to bring her perspectives into research and helped evolve people's understanding of a subject in order to improve many lives. Thanks to Anandi Joshi's efforts, many more women have been able to do excellent research work in all academic disciplines and have helped improve our understanding of many things in the world.

What this tells us is that academic writing is not just about doing assignments or getting marks. All of that is also important, but it needs to be understood within the larger purpose of academic writing which is ultimately to help evolve existing knowledge about various things in order to improve the quality of life of all beings. To do this, it is important that we bring in our unique perspectives based on our life experiences to what we study, because each new perspective helps to see old problems in new ways.

This is why, as you embark on your journey in academic writing, please keep in mind this larger purpose and try to bring your unique perspectives to help improve existing knowledge in the world!

3.9 LET US SUM UP

These are some of the points that you must remember:

1. Writing is a technology that helps us produce, record, and share thoughts, connect with people and enable us to do things in the world with them.
2. Academic writing is the kind of writing that helps connect academic people (researchers, teachers, students) and enables them to do academic work which primarily involves producing knowledge and sharing knowledge.
3. Producing knowledge or research is the systematic attempt to analyse and understand the mysteries around us in order to make them meaningful and, in some cases, also useful for the human species. Researchers or academicians' study different aspects of the world around us using unique tools and methods in order to produce knowledge that impacts the world.
4. Knowledge sharing is usually of two types. The first, which includes sharing of research between academics helps to improve the quality of knowledge produced as more and more people are able to help refine the ideas by sharing their thoughts, feedback and perspectives on them. The second kind of sharing, which is done between academics and the general public helps to educate people and enables them to engage with ideas that are not usually accessible to them.
5. Academic writing is something that helps in both these processes of knowledge production or research as well as that of knowledge sharing.
6. The main ingredient of all academic writing is called an argument.
7. An argument is a kind of writing or speech where the author makes a point or idea and gives supporting evidence and reasons for their ideas in order to try and convince their audience about the correctness, importance, and value of their idea.
8. While opinions in everyday life usually lack systematic evidence and reasoning, what differentiates academic arguments from everyday life opinions is that they consist of

- ideas that contain rigorous evidence and reasoning so that other academics can analyse, interpret, and critique them using their knowledge in as unbiased a manner as possible.
9. Academic writing is a very powerful tool as it shapes the public's ideas about what is true or false, thereby affecting things like laws and policies which shape people's daily lives.
 10. The importance of academic writing lies in the fact that those who are able to practise and produce such writing, hold the power to mould thought and make changes in society. Individuals who are denied access to education and in turn, academic reading and writing, are prevented from exploring the chance to make a contribution leading to a better understanding of the world we live in.
 11. As you embark on your journey in academic writing, please keep in mind this larger purpose and try to bring your unique perspectives to help improve existing knowledge in the world!

3.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

To further develop your academic writing skills here are some great sources that you are recommended to try browse through:

1. Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2016). *They Say/I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (3rd ed.). W.W. Norton and Company.
2. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/index.html
3. <http://writingspaces.org/node/1706>

3.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

4. **Idea:** Indian economy has improved since the policy of liberalization was implemented in the 1990s.

Evidence: This policy led to a great increase in the number of jobs available for common people as big multinational corporations were able to come to India and set up offices through this policy.

Reasoning: More jobs means the economy is improving.

Conclusion: Since there is idea, evidence, and reasoning, it is an argument. You may accept this argument or give a counter argument to challenge the core ideas in it. For example, it is possible for other academics to give counter arguments to this argument by saying that just jobs are not a good marker of economic growth, rather the quality of jobs also matters. Such dialogue between academics through argumentation helps in the refinement of ideas.

5. **Idea:** Yellow is a more beautiful color than orange.

Evidence: Not present

Reasoning: Not present

Conclusion: Since there is only an idea and no evidence or reasoning, this is an opinion and not an argument.

6. **Idea:** In order to stay healthy, one must try to exercise every day.
Evidence: Research has shown that if humans run regularly, then their hearts become strong and are able to pump blood to all their organs without any trouble.
Reasoning: Since the heart is one of the most important organs of the body, anything that increases its strength will help make the human body healthy.
Conclusion: Since there is idea, evidence, and reasoning, it is an argument. As goes with all arguments, you may accept this argument or give a counter argument to challenge the core ideas in it based on new evidence or reasoning that you may have.



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 4 TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 A Bird's Eye View of Academic Disciplines and Types of Academic Writing
 - 4.2.1 What is an Academic discipline?
 - 4.2.2 Types of Academic Disciplines and Types of Academic Writing
 - 4.2.2.1: Sciences
 - 4.2.2.2: Social Sciences
 - 4.2.2.3.: Humanities
 - 4.2.2.4: Business
- 4.3 Students' Roles in Academia
 - 4.3.1 Inventors of Knowledge
 - 4.3.2 Balancing Conventions and Innovations
 - 4.3.3 Becoming an apprentice
 - 4.3.3.1: Who is an Apprentice?
 - 4.3.3.2: Levels of Apprenticeship
 - 4.3.3.3: Mistakes are Good!
 - 4.3.4: Diary of Reflections on Academic Writing
- 4.4 Let us Sum up
- 4.5 Suggested Readings
- 4.6 Works Cited
- 4.7 Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to:

- Give you an overview of the different kinds of academic disciplines or subjects that exist in the world, what kind of knowledge they produce and share, and the kinds of related academic writing they use.
- Help you understand what role you as a student can play in this world of academic writing.
- Equip you to train yourself and enter these academic disciplines by learning the types of academic writing done in your field.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

After having read the previous Unit (Block 1, Unit 3: Academic and Non-Academic Writing), hopefully you feel more comfortable with the idea of what academic writing is, what it contains, and why people do it. In that Unit, we looked at how academic writing is a specialized kind of writing that helps connect academic people (researchers, teachers, students) and enables them to do academic work which primarily involves producing knowledge or research and sharing it. We also talked about how researchers or academicians' study different aspects of the world around us using unique tools and methods in order to produce this knowledge that impacts the world. Most importantly, we also explored how

academic writing is something that helps in both these processes of knowledge production or research as well as that of knowledge sharing.

Now it's time to shift gears and explore the different types of academic writing that you can expect to encounter in academia. In this unit, we will understand what some of the most common types of academic writing are, figure out what role you can play as a student in the world of academic writing, and finally, how you can train yourself to enter these academic disciplines by learning the types of academic writing done in your subject.

So, let's get started!

4.2 A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES AND TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

In this section, you will get a bird's eye view of some predominant academic disciplines, understand what they study in the world, (i.e., what kind of knowledge they produce and share in the world), and learn more about the kinds of academic writings they use to do this. Just like a flying bird is able to get a broad view of the world down below, you too will be able to have a broad understanding or bird's eye view of all that goes on in the world of academia once you have read through this unit.

4.2.1 What is an academic discipline?

An academic discipline, also known as academic "subject" in schools in India, is a distinct branch of knowledge where ideas about specific aspects of the world are produced and shared by research scholars, teachers, and students spread out across various academic institutions. For example, history is an academic discipline or subject where knowledge about past events of human societies is produced and shared by historians or research scholars, teachers, and students who study history. They do so using distinct types of academic writing like critical essays, biographies, and books on history etc.

Based on what kind of things in the world academicians study and what types of academic writing they use to produce and share their knowledge, we can classify all the academic disciplines or subjects that exist in the world. Academic disciplines that have similarities in what they study or how they study are also clubbed into larger categories called academic streams. For example, natural science is an academic stream that consists of academic disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, etc.

In the table below, you will find various types of academic streams, along with the academic disciplines they contain, what they study, and the types of academic writing they use to produce and share knowledge. As you will notice, there are lots of differences as well as similarities in the types of academic writings that are used across disciplines:

4.2.2 Types of Academic Disciplines and Types of Academic Writing

Streams	Discipline/ Subjects	What do they study?	Types of Academic Writing They Use
Natural & Applied Sciences	Agriculture	Farming	Research papers (in the form of experiments-based laboratory reports, with the exception of mathematics which uses mathematical proof-based papers), research proposals, literature reviews, case studies, reports etc.
	Biology	Living beings	
	Computer Science	Computers and information technology	
	Chemistry	Atoms, molecules, ions, elements, compounds etc.	
	Engineering	Application of scientific theories	
	Geology	Rocks and other terrestrial elements	
	Mathematics	Numbers and Patterns	
	Medicine	Human and Animal Health	
	Physics	Matter and its motion and behaviour	
Social Sciences	Anthropology	Behaviour, norms, practices and values of human societies	Research Papers (most commonly data collection-based reports, but can be experiment-based laboratory reports as well), research proposals, literature reviews, case studies, reports etc.
	Education	Teacher training, student learning, school and university design and management.	
	Law	Judiciary and laws	
	Political Science	Politics, power, and governments	
	Psychology	Human mind and behaviour	
	Sociology	Behaviour, norms, practices and values of human societies	

Humanities	Art	Fine arts (painting, sculpture etc.) and Performing arts (music, dance, theatre etc.)	Research Papers (in the form of critical essays), literature reviews, research proposals etc.
	Film Studies	Films, TV, Radio, Culture	
	History	Past events of human societies	
	Languages	Hindi, English, Urdu, Spanish etc.	
	Literature	Poems, Novels, Epics etc.	
	Music	Songs	
	Philosophy	Fundamental questions and theories about existence, knowledge, ethics etc.	
Business & Professional Degrees	Accounting	Financial transactions	Research papers (in the form of data collection-based reports, or experiment-based laboratory reports), Professional writings (business plans, marketing plans, management reports, project proposals, project reports, case studies, memos).
	Economics	Behaviour of people engaging in production, consumption, distribution of goods and services	
	Finance	Money and investments	
	Management	Administration of organizations	
	Marketing	Advertisements and Promotions for selling products	
	Tourism and hospitality management	Administration of organizations in tourism sector	
	Vocational studies	Training for specialized jobs like technical expert, beautician, computer operator etc.	

Table 1.0: List of academic disciplines and types of academic writing Source: Adapted from Carter (2007) and Lumen Learning.

Isn't it amazing how humans have developed so many different types of academic disciplines with different areas of specialization and unique types of academic writing? What you see in this table is supposed to give a rough idea about these things. While all the main types of academic writing have been covered here, there are many more types which you might come to know as you grow as an academic writer. Please also keep in mind that this classification is not rigidly followed everywhere. In different academic institutions, you may see different formations of these disciplines while the overarching structure is usually maintained. For example, in some universities "psychology" might come under the Natural Sciences instead of the Social Sciences. Similarly, some places consider "history" to be social sciences and not humanities, while in some places "law" is considered to be a professional degree while in others it is classified as a social science. There are also many other disciplines and subjects that exist in the world but they cannot be included here due to the limited scope and space. For example, within Social Sciences, there are many other disciplines like "gender studies" that can also be added.

Finally, you should also know that these academic disciplines evolve and change over time, with certain disciplines merging into each other or giving rise to new ones. "Gender studies" for example is a new academic discipline that has developed over the last few decades through a mixture of ideas and people from fields like sociology, literature, anthropology, psychology, and law!

Now let's go a little deeper into each of these academic streams to better understand the disciplines they contain as well as the types of academic writing that they use.

4.2.2.1 Natural & Applied Sciences

In all the disciplines that come under the stream of natural and applied sciences, i.e., disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, geology, mathematics, and medicine, the focus is on producing knowledge about different aspects of the natural world around us and also to apply that knowledge to produce a range of products that can better serve humanity. To do this, scholars in these disciplines primarily write research papers in the form of experiment-based laboratory reports. These research papers follow the format known as IMRD which stands for Introduction - Methods - Results - Discussion:

IMRD style of research papers (Natural & Applied Sciences)

- **I or Introduction:** This includes the context and purpose of the study along with the main research questions;
- **M or Methods:** This includes description of the methods or techniques that will be used to find answers to the research questions. In natural and applied sciences, experiments are the main research methods used;
- **R or Results:** This includes the results that researchers get from the experiments;
- **D or Discussion:** This includes analysis of the results which ultimately leads to answers for the research questions.

Before they actually conduct their research and write their IMRD style research papers, researchers often write research proposals where they lay out their plans for conducting research. This often involves literature reviews where they survey and review existing research in an area to figure out what kind of research they can do. Apart from IMRD style

papers and research proposals, in some scientific disciplines, case studies and reports are also used which involve an in-depth analysis of a particular case or situation from the real world. For example, in the field of medicine, doctors often do case studies on patients where they analyze the history of their symptoms, results of any diagnostic tests that they have undergone and based on this give a diagnosis and method for treatment. The report that they write based on their case study consists of a clear and detailed description of all these steps.

While all disciplines within the natural and applied sciences usually write their research in IMRD style research papers along with research proposals, literature reviews, case-studies and reports, there are variations on the themes and objects of inquiry that each discipline picks up in their research writing. For example, while biologists write research papers describing their study of animals or microorganisms, engineers do so to talk about their study of new technology etc.

4.2.2.2 Social Sciences

In terms of what they study, the natural sciences and social sciences are obviously very different. While the natural sciences study the natural world, the social sciences study the social world, i.e., the world made up of humans. However, in terms of their approaches towards research as well as the kinds of academic writing they use to do their research, social sciences and the natural and applied sciences have several similarities as well as differences.

In terms of similarities, it's important to note that both the social sciences as well as the natural sciences write their research papers in the IMRD format. Just like the natural sciences, disciplines in the social sciences use research proposals and literature reviews as pre-writing steps to write those papers too. Case studies and reports are also common in the social sciences. There are certain important differences though. While the natural sciences primarily use experiments conducted in laboratories as their main method (the M in IMRD stands for Method, remember?) for collecting data for doing research, the social sciences on the other hand primarily rely on methods like interviews, surveys, and field observations for collecting their data.

Through their analysis of these different types of data, both the natural as well as the social sciences seek to develop systematic and overarching theories or answers which can explain the phenomena that they have observed in the world. However, there is a difference between the outlook of researchers towards the kind of theories or answers they build. While in the pure and applied sciences, the attempt of the researchers is usually to find universal answers to their research questions, i.e., answers that are applicable across the world in most settings, in the social sciences, researchers are usually open to subjectivity, i.e., the idea that the answers they find to their research questions might vary across different social contexts. For example, while an applied science research question like "What medicine works best for reducing fever?" might have an answer that is applicable across major parts of the world, a social science research question like "Which form of government is the most beneficial for its citizens?" will have answers that vary widely across different social contexts. This is not always a very hard or fast rule though and you might find exceptions to this rule in the work of some researchers who try to merge the outlook of the two academic streams in their research.

4.2.2.3 Humanities

The Humanities and Social Sciences share some similarities with each other. They both focus on the study of human and social phenomena like art, languages, rituals, literature, social norms and values etc. However, the difference between them lies in the fact that while the Social Sciences follow a more scientific approach to study these things, the Humanities follow a more critical or criticism-based approach to studying them. This difference in approach towards research also gets reflected in the kind of academic writing that they do.

Let us first look at their differences in terms of their different approaches to research. By saying that the Social Sciences follow a scientific approach, what is meant is that social sciences rely on gathering data by observing real people and their lives in the world, based on which they try to develop systematic and overarching theories which can explain what they observe. The Humanities on the other hand usually don't directly observe real people and their lives, but rather look at how those people and their lives have been preserved and reflected in the form of art, music, literature, film and ideas etc. So, for example, in order to study a concept like "gender", while a social scientist might go to a group of people and interview them about their experience of gender, a humanities scholar on the other hand, would probably use poems, novels, or films and study how the concept of gender has been represented in them. Next in terms of analysis too, while a social scientist might rely on tools like statistics to find patterns in their data, scholars in the Humanities prefer something called criticism instead. While in common language we tend to think of the word "criticism" as something negative, in the academic world, it refers to a particular form of knowledge production which involves analysis, interpretation, and judgement about the form and content of the art, music, literature, film or ideas etc. that a researcher is studying. Finally, in terms of the differences in the methods of research between the Social Sciences and Humanities, the Humanities are also known for being very open to immense subjectivity in their criticisms, i.e., scholars in these disciplines usually accept the idea that the kind of research questions they ask will have many different answers rather than a single correct one. For example, instead of there being a single correct answer to a humanities research question like "why did Rabindranath Tagore's poetry have such a lasting impact on India?", a very large number of answers can be produced depending on which scholar or student is answering the question.

These differences between the Social Sciences and the Humanities are also reflected in the kinds of research papers that are written in them. In the Humanities, the research papers are primarily written in the form of critical essays instead of the IMRD style papers that are common in Social Sciences. In this type of critical essay writing, scholars usually have more freedom to arrange their writing according to a structure that best suits their style of thinking instead of following a fixed format (like the IMRD format followed in the pure sciences and social sciences). Apart from the critical essay type of research paper, disciplines in the Humanities do use research proposals and literature reviews as well, just like the Pure Sciences and Social Sciences do.

While these differences are important to understand, it is also important to note that the differences mentioned here between the Social Sciences and Humanities are also not always very rigid and you will find lots of cases of researchers and students mixing the methods and types of academic writing followed in the two academic streams to produce and share their knowledge.

4.2.2.4 Business & Professional Degrees

In all the disciplines that come under the stream of Business, i.e. disciplines like Accounting, Finance, Management, Marketing, Economics etc. the focus is on producing knowledge about different aspects of the business and economic world. To do this, two major kinds of academic writings are usually done. First, in terms of Research papers, scholars in these disciplines use both IMRD style research papers as well as critical essays. Like the Pure and Applied sciences they also conduct experiments in laboratories, but like the Social Sciences, they also collect data from the world by observing business related phenomenon. Apart from research papers, people in these disciplines also do a lot of professional writing in the form of project proposals, project reports, management and sales reports, case studies and memos that are required to run businesses. Case studies and reports are especially important in these fields. This is especially true for professional fields like tourism, hospitality, management, and vocational studies which are heavily focused towards real world businesses.

Now take a few deep breaths...

The idea behind sharing these details about what happens in all the disciplines is not to overwhelm you. Nor will you be expected to do all these kinds of writing as a student! The idea of sharing this is to simply help you understand the wonderful world that you are entering into and what all possibilities lie within it. Think of it almost like a video game. All these paths are open in front of you and you can choose which ones you want to take! While you will primarily be doing only the kinds of academic writing that happen in your subject, knowing about what happens in other disciplines will enrich your mind and enable you to think more creatively and rigorously. Also please keep in mind that you will not immediately be expected to write research papers in your subject! That process takes time. So does the process of learning about how knowledge is produced in your own discipline as well as other disciplines. Slowly, as you progress through your college degree, you will learn some of these types of academic writing and knowledge production mentioned above, in your classes in more detail.

Check your progress 1

Based on Table 1.0 write down the name of the academic discipline that you are studying along with what aspect of the world it studies and the kinds of academic writings that people in that field use to conduct their research work. If your academic field is not present in this table, then search the internet, or ask your teachers and friends to find answers to these questions for your particular field.

Let's explore 1: Go to a website called MICUSP or Michigan Corpus of Upper Level Student papers (<https://elicopter.info/>). Here on the left side, you can choose an academic discipline as well as a type of writing. Choose the academic discipline that you are a part of or one that you are interested in and select any type of academic writing also. You will now see towards the center of the website different examples of student writing in this discipline from the University of Michigan in USA. Click on any of them and read them. Keep doing this whenever you get time to get an idea of the different kinds of academic writing that students do in these different disciplines.

In the next section now, we will look at what role you as students can play in all these disciplines with their different types of academic writing.

4.3 STUDENTS' ROLES IN ACADEMIA

As students you are the very heart and soul of academia! Without you, the academic disciplines wouldn't exist. So, when you write an assignment, know that you are doing important work. Instead of thinking about yourself passively as just consumers of knowledge that other people create, you should start thinking of yourselves as inventors or co-creators of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.

Students' role in academia = inventors of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.

Let's look at all the ideas in this definition closely now.

4.3.1 Inventors of Knowledge



Source: www.eatmedia.blogspot.com

David Bartholomae, a scholar of writing studies, describes the role of students in the world of academic writing really well. In his essay, "Inventing the University", he says that "every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion— invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (Bartholomae 4).

Why does Bartholomae feel that each time a student writes something for their academic disciplines, they are "inventing" the university or a branch of it? Isn't invention something that very senior researchers do? Not really. This is the change in thinking that Bartholomae is trying to bring about. While we usually think of inventing or producing new knowledge as something that only senior researchers do after decades of studying in an academic discipline, Bartholomae suggests that even young students do mini-inventions each time they do

academic writing. How does that happen? Let's look at how Bartholomae explains this further.

4.3.2 Balancing Conventions and Innovations

Bartholomae says that students “have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline” (Bartholomae 5). According to him, when you write an assignment for any of your courses, you don't have to just repeat and replicate what your teachers say. Rather, you need to find a “compromise” or balance between conventions and innovations. Let's look at what each of these means below:

- **Conventions:** What he calls “requirements of convention” or the “history of a discipline” mean the ways of writing and thinking that are normally followed in your subjects which you will see in your textbooks, in the styles of teaching of your teachers, in the notes of senior students, as well as examples you find on the internet. These have been followed for so long, that they have become almost like rules for writing in different disciplines.
- **Innovations:** What he calls “personal history” or “idiosyncrasy” means your own thoughts or personality or ideas that come from your own life and experiences that can help to fuel creativity and innovations in your writing.

This may seem strange to you. In most schools, we are taught to simply rote-learn the “correct” answers from our books or the notes that teachers give us. The better we repeat what we have learnt, the higher marks we get. When we enter college though, that idea changes and slowly we have to transform ourselves from being only passive consumers of knowledge to becoming active producers of knowledge. To make this shift, or to “invent” in our writing as Bartholomae recommends, we have to balance conventions and innovations. How do you do this kind of balancing between conventions and innovations?

Here's an example. Look at this unit that you are reading. The “convention” in college textbooks, is that they should only have lots of text without many engaging images or other forms of visual representation. Visual representations are usually used only in school textbooks. Based on my “personal history” I love reading books that have lots of pictures. Pictures make the books so much more fun to read! Because of this, I decided to include some images in this unit too. I hope that you are enjoying them!

This is how I found a balance between conventions (text-based college chapters) and innovation (visual representation) to write this unit. How did I decide what kind of innovation to use? I thought of you, my readers! I imagined what would appeal to college students who are just about to start on their college journeys. I also looked back on my own college days. Based on this imagination, I decided that including some images would be fun and would not cause any negative impact on my audience. The key thing to keep in mind while balancing conventions and innovation is to think about who your audience is and what their reaction to your innovations could be. In some situations, sticking only to conventions is best (like in school board exams), while in some cases it is recommended to include some innovations (like in some of your course assignments, if your teachers encourage innovations). The big

question now comes up — how do you learn to balance conventions and innovations?

4.3.3 Becoming an Apprentice

To do this balancing, think of yourself as entering into an apprenticeship in a particular discipline.

4.3.3.1 Who is an apprentice?

Apprentices are trainees who learn by getting a mixture of practical experience and theoretical study in a field.

Think about how people become tailors or carpenters or goldsmiths. All these professions involve a mixture of study and practical experience. People wanting to become a tailor, or carpenter, or a goldsmith will study their respective areas and try to get training experience by working with seniors as well as other trainees like them in the field. In many of these fields, this is how knowledge is passed from generation to generation. Similarly, you can think of academic writing as a kind of apprenticeship or training in knowledge production that is available to you in different academic subjects. As you gradually develop expertise in the different types of academic writing followed in a discipline, you also end up developing expertise in the kind of knowledge it produces and also learn how to balance conventions and innovations.

4.3.3.2 Levels of apprenticeship

There are many levels of academic apprenticeship. As an undergraduate student you will initially do academic writings like exams, assignments, reports, reviews, summaries etc. so that you are able to familiarize yourself with the central ideas in your subject. These kinds of academic writings help apprentices learn the basic tools or conventions of their trade. What you learnt about arguments in Block 1, Unit 3 will help you in writing those. Gradually as you progress in your degree, you might also be writing term papers, or projects, or maybe even research proposals and papers. Through these other kinds of academic writing, you will slowly develop your own ideas on a topic and share them with your teachers and classmates. Whatever ideas you develop here, could also be adapted to digital media forms like podcasts, videos, text messages, blogposts etc., if you are interested and have the time to share your findings and learnings with the larger world. Here you will need to show a lot of innovation on how you present your ideas to the general public. If you are able to pursue higher studies then you will conduct full-fledged research, write a thesis or a dissertation which is essentially a very long research paper where you learn how to balance conventions (existing research) and innovations (the new research that you wish to do). The deeper you go into your apprenticeship into academia, the stronger your academic writing and researching skills will gradually become and the more you will learn how to balance innovations with conventions. Even if you decide to get a job after your undergraduate degree, many skills that you learn in academic writing will come in handy and help you develop skills of critical thinking and communicating effectively, which are useful in all spheres of life.

4.3.3.3 Mistakes are good!

A very important idea to keep in mind through the image of apprenticeship is also to remember that the learning journey of apprentices involves making lots of mistakes. In fact, if you aren't making any mistakes that means you aren't really learning much. So don't expect to get everything right from the very start. Look at all your mistakes positively, and see how you can learn from them. Think of each writing you do as an experiment in trying to balance conventions and innovations. Some of these will be successful and some of these will involve lots of mistakes that will help you learn. Here it is important to remember what Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric light bulb said when asked about all the time he failed to invent the lightbulb — “I have not failed 10,000 times”, he said, “I’ve successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work.”

What can you do to become a good apprentice? This will be answered in the next section where we look at a diary of reflections on academic writing that you can keep throughout college years.

4.3.4 Diary of Reflections on Academic Writing



Do you know what is an important, but largely hidden secret of good writing in particular and good learning in general? The answer is “reflection”. Remember what we talked about reflection in Block 1, Unit 1? There we had defined reflection as “the act of introspecting on what you read and observe. It involves asking how and why things happen the way they do and cultivating a deeper engagement with what we read and observe”. To reflect on any activity that you do in your life, we asked you to consider the following questions:

- What do I feel when I do this activity?
- Why do I engage with this activity?
- What significance does it have for me?
- How do I speak about this activity to other people?

- How do others speak about this activity?
- Do I agree or disagree with them?
- Would I like to do it differently?

You can apply this reflection activity to the academic writing that you do through your college years and beyond. This is one of the best ways to develop a deeper awareness of the various types of academic writing integral in your college life. What follows are some suggestions on how you can do this.

What to write about in your reflection diary? Whenever you come across a new writing assignment, write the name of the type of academic writing it is in your diary. Also write about the unique features or conventions that that writing has. Here is a list of questions that you can use to do this:

- Who is this type of academic writing being written for i.e., who is the audience of this piece of writing?
- What purpose does it serve?
- What kind of content is required for it?
- What kind of structure do you need to follow?
- What kind of words and sentences are required for it?
- Is there an example of it that you can find somewhere on the internet to get a better sense of how to write it?
- What process or steps do you need to follow to write it?
- Is there any kind of creative innovation that you can do with it?
- What was your experience while writing it?
- Did you enjoy it or not? Was it easy or difficult?
- What uses could this writing have in your future?
- Could it be helpful in other courses or education that you enroll in?
- Could it be helpful in the kind of jobs you take up later on? Outside of education and careers, could it also help you do something socially?
- Do you have any other thoughts or reflections to add?

As the entries in your notebook grow, also think about what connections exist between these various types of writing. Remember how in Unit 1 we spoke about how after we reflect on various things, it is also important to connect them into some sort of a coherent narrative? That is what you have to ultimately do with your reflections in your academic writing diary also. Whenever you come across a new type of writing, think about how you can apply the skills of writing that you already know to it. Finally, do you have any other thoughts or reflections to add? It doesn't need to be all serious! You can also write honest and funny thoughts here. Feel free to also draw pictures or innovate in your reflection diary.

Here is an example of what such an entry would look like in my notebook for a type of writing called "Summary" that we spoke about in Unit 1 earlier. Summaries are used in all disciplines and are an important part of all the writings that we looked at earlier, like research papers or reports.

My Diary of Reflections on Academic Writing

Sample Entry # 1

Type of Academic Writing: **Summary**

Audience: Myself and my teacher

Purpose: To improve my ability to remember key ideas of a reading or essay that I have read.

Content: A condensation of the main points in a reading or essay

Structure: Includes some context about who the author of the reading is, the title of the reading, as well as the main points or ideas in it.

Type of words and sentences: It requires me to rephrase key ideas from the reading in my own words. To do this, using sentences with reporting verbs like “The author said that ____”; “The author argued that ____”; “The author claimed that ____” is quite helpful.

Examples and lessons from the internet: On searching “how to write a summary” on www.google.com and www.youtube.com, I found a very helpful video which helped me understand this type of academic writing very well. Here is the link to it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Brre8LmXo8c&ab_channel=jilljitsu81

Process required to write it: First I will need to read the essay and make notes and underline important points. Then I will need to list down all the important points on a page along with the name of the author, book, and the year in which it was written. After this, I will have to connect all the points in sentences written in a paragraph. At the top, I will add a heading, which will be something like “Summary of ____” and write the name of the book or essay in the blank.

Possibility for creativity: Depends on the course for which it is being written. In some courses, for example, summaries can be written as a letter to a friend, where you summarize a book or a reading for your friend to explain it to them. This would be an innovation! However in some courses, such creativity is not encouraged. It is a tricky issue trying to understand where creativity will be appreciated and where it is best to stick to traditional ways of writing. I think it will take time for me to learn this.

My experience of writing it: I found it to be a little enjoyable. At the beginning it used to be difficult, but slowly, it got easy.

Uses of it: Overtime I have come to find this type of writing very useful. If I write a summary of every reading or essay that I do for all my classes, I have all that information ready whenever I have to give exams. I also think that summary writing could be useful when I get a job later on and have to note down main ideas that I learn at my workplace. I think it can also help me bring about some positive social change. Whenever I come across a book or a reading that is very insightful, I can quickly summarise it and share the summary with my friends and family on Whatsapp to help them also learn along with me.

Connections to other kinds of writing: When I started writing research papers and reports, I realised that many of them include a section called “Survey of Literature” or “Literature

Review” where I had to provide an overview of the various other kinds of research that has already been done on the topic on which I am writing. There, I had to summarise different research papers that I found on the area. My knowledge of summaries became very useful there.

Any other interesting thoughts: In the future, could summary writing be possible by computers? Like if we put a book in a software, could the software tell us what the summary is? What if I could invent a software like that! Wow, what a great business idea :)

Note: When you are creating such entries in your notebook it is absolutely normal to not know a lot about different kinds of writing. This is what apprenticeship is all about. Nobody is born with all this knowledge. We learn about it slowly as we engage with new kinds of writings in college. Here are a few resources that will really help you. Whenever you are creating an entry for a type of writing in your notebook, go and search on these websites to find answers to your questions:

- The WAC Clearinghouse <https://wac.colostate.edu/>
- Online Writing Lab, Purdue University <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- A book called “They Say/I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing” by Graff and Birkenstien. If you can’t find the whole book, then you can also go to this link to download a few important ideas from the book:
https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf
- For great examples of student writing in different disciplines, you can go to the MICUSP that we looked at in Let’s Explore #1 <https://elicorpora.info/>

4.4 LET US SUM UP

These are the points that we have covered:

1. An academic discipline, also known as academic “subject” in schools in India, is a distinct branch of knowledge where ideas about specific aspects of the world are produced and shared by research scholars, teachers, and students spread out across various academic institutions. For example, history is an academic discipline or subject where knowledge about past events of human societies is produced and shared by historians or research scholars, teachers, and students who study history. They do so using distinct types of academic writing like critical essays, biographies, and books on history etc.
2. An academic stream is a collection of academic disciplines. There are four main streams into which most of the academic disciplines of the world can be classified: natural and applied sciences, social sciences, humanities, business and professional degrees.
3. Each of the disciplines in these streams uses distinct types of academic writing.
4. In terms of the main types used, natural and applied sciences use IMRD or Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion type of research papers with experiments being the main method that they follow to produce knowledge. They also use research

proposals, literature reviews, case studies, and reports.

5. The social sciences use the IMRD style paper too but in terms of methods they primarily use interviews, surveys, and field observations. They use literature reviews, research proposals, case studies and reports too.
6. In the humanities, criticism based research papers or critical essay papers are the most commonly used type of writing. Research proposals and literature reviews are also used there.
7. In business and professional degrees, a mixture of IMRD style papers (with both laboratory experiments as well as interviews and surveys) as well as critical essay papers are used. These fields also use a range of professional writings like business plans, marketing plans, management reports, project proposals, project reports, case studies and memos.
8. Students' role in academia is to be inventors of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.
9. To become an inventor of knowledge who can balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as an apprentice, it is useful to keep a diary of reflections on academic writing.

4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

To further develop your academic writing skills here are some great sources that you are recommended to browse through:

- The WAC Clearinghouse <https://wac.colostate.edu/>
- Online Writing Lab, Purdue University <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- A book called "They Say/I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing" by Graff and Birkenstien. If you can't find the whole book, then you can also go to this link to download a few important ideas from the book:
https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf
- For great examples of student writing in different disciplines, you can go to the MICUSP that we looked at in Let's Explore #1 <https://elicorpora.info/>

4.6 WORKS CITED

Bartholomae, D. (1986). Inventing The University. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 5(1), 4–23.
Carter, M. (2007). Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines. *College Composition and Communication*, 58(3), 35.
Lumen Learning. (n.d.). Exploring Academic Disciplines. In *College Writing Handbook*. Jefferson Community College. Retrieved March 1, 2021, from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-jeffersonccc-styleguide/chapter/exploring-academic-disciplines/>

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

All the activities in this unit require you to write answers to them by reflecting on your own experiences.

