

Distinguishing between academic and personal styles of writing

1) Look at the two sentences below.

- A Linguists were and remain unconvinced about Noam Chomsky of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who discovered that however disparate human languages seem, all share a common, basic structure, seemingly hardwired into the brain.
- B The way you speak says a lot about you.

1. Which sentence is 'academic' and which one is 'non-academic'?
2. Identify at least three features in each sentence which makes it a) academic b) non-academic.

Recognizing levels of formality

Study the table below which identifies two quite different levels of formality in writing style.

	Academic	Non-academic
Reader	academics	family, friends
Content	serious thought	conversational
Style	complex sentences showing considerable variety of construction	mostly simple and compound sentences joined by conjunctions such as <i>and</i> or <i>but</i>
Organization	clear and well-planned	less likely to be clear and well-planned
Grammar	very likely to be without errors	may not always use complete sentences
Vocabulary	technical/academic words used accurately	use of short forms, idioms and slang

2) Now tick the sentences either F (formal) or I (informal). Identify the features which helped you to decide.

Sentence	F	I
I couldn't finish the paper on time.		
The initial investigation was completed and the results analyzed.		
I'd like to draw your attention to previous research in this area.		
In the last decade, some researchers began to point out the problems with this theory.		
He agreed with me that this procedure didn't make much sense.		
We'll repeat the tests sometime next year.		
While it is too early to draw firm conclusions from the data, preliminary analysis suggests the following trends.		
In addition, the research attempts to answer three further related questions.		

Distinguishing between levels of formality

3) Study the following texts and reorder them from the most academic to the least academic (1-4).

A What makes a good paragraph? It's difficult to say. Anyway, I'll try to give you an answer. A good paragraph starts with a main idea of some kind. The rest of the paragraph goes on to develop the main idea by explaining it, or supporting it with evidence.

B As many first-time entrepreneurs know, or have found out, getting a traditional bank or even an SBA loan to start a new business isn't easy. So where else can you go to fund your dream? Fortunately, today entrepreneurs have many options than ever when it comes to funding their new business or business idea, many of which are less difficult to obtain and less expensive than a bank loan.

C The difference between a paper and an online presentation is that in print your document forms a whole and the reader is focused on the entire set of information, whereas on the Web you need to split each document into multiple hyperlinked pages since users are not willing to read long pages.

D A growing number of business schools are integrating environmental and social sustainability into their curricula, with a newly emerging emphasis on greening across the full spectrum of functional specialties (World Resources Institute, 2005). While evidence suggests that these efforts can be effective in raising awareness of environmental issues and the ecological impacts of business (Cordano et al., 2003), the question remains as to whether students are accepting environmentally sustainable business strategies and practices as a legitimate part of the managerial decision-making process (Springett and Kearins, 2001).