

Academic orientation

- Setting study goals in academic English
- Focusing on academic study
- Reading and writing in academic English
- Attending lectures
- Studying independently on an academic English course
- Thinking about the role of language in academic English

This unit introduces some key skills that you will learn about during the course, and focuses on the features of academic English and the issues relevant to using English in an academic context.

1 Setting study goals in academic English

1.1 Answer the following questions about your level and study goals. At the end of each question (in brackets) there are some suggestions to help you write your answers.

- 1 What English language level do you need to have in order to study at university in English? (CEFR level B1 / upper intermediate level / IELTS 6 / Cambridge CAE level)
- 2 How close do you think you are now to reaching this level? (quite close / I've got quite a bit of study to do / it's a long way off)
- 3 What do you think you are good at in studying English? (speaking / grammar / vocabulary / listening)
- 4 What aspect of academic English study do you think you need to improve in? Put the following in order, with 1 = most difficult and 7 = least difficult.
 - a finding useful texts in the library ___
 - b planning essays ___
 - c taking part in discussions with other students ___
 - d doing presentations in seminars ___
 - e reading articles and books ___
 - f writing essays ___
 - g understanding lectures ___

1.2 Compare your answers to 1.1 with a partner.

1.3 What differences do you think there will be between general English and academic English? Complete the Academic English column of the table below.

Skill	General English	Academic English
Reading	Shorter texts on different topics of general interest	
Writing	Informal writing (e.g. email messages) and creative writing (e.g. stories)	
Listening	Understanding conversations on everyday topics	
Speaking	Taking part in conversations for social reasons	

2 Focusing on academic study

2.1 a Imagine you are studying at an English-language university. Discuss the following questions together.

- 1 How many contact hours per week do you think you will have with tutors and lecturers?
- 2 Will the information you hear in lectures teach you everything you need to know in a course of study?
- 3 How much help do you think you will get from lecturers and tutors?
- 4 How much independent study do you think you will have to do at university?
- 5 Is it important to have strong motivation?

b  Listen to Fei answer the questions in 2.1. Are your ideas the same as his?



2.2 a Discuss the following questions together.

- 1 How much reading do you think you will need to do?
- 2 What kinds of texts do you think you will read?
One coursebook only? A variety of books? Articles?
- 3 Why will you need to read? For essays? For lectures?
For seminars? For exams?

b  Listen to Christoffer answer these questions. Are your ideas the same as his?



3 Reading and writing in academic English

3.1 a Look at the list of key terms associated with academic reading and writing. Guess which ones refer to reading and which ones refer to writing. One term is not relevant.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 take notes | 5 ask for clarification |
| 2 main idea | 6 critical thinking |
| 3 building an argument | 7 writer's position |
| 4 relevance of the text | |

b Complete this summary of the terms associated with academic reading using the words in the box.

analyse find out information

When you read a book or article for an essay you need to **1** _____ if the information in the text is relevant and useful. If it is, you should take notes on the **2** _____ in the text. You should also **3** _____ the information in the text and think about how it compares with other ideas, how important it is and how true it is. This is known as critical thinking.

3.2 a Complete the summary of the terms associated with academic writing using the words in the box.

obvious organise topic

When you write an essay you need to think about what you believe is true or not as far as the essay **1** _____ is concerned. This is known as the writer's position (or the *thesis statement*). You should not state your position in an **2** _____ way, but you should build an argument in the essay that supports your position. You should also **3** _____ your argument into paragraphs. Most paragraphs contain a main idea, which is sometimes known as a *topic sentence*.

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b Think of your previous experience writing in English or your own language. Discuss the questions.

- 1 What kinds of texts have you written?
- 2 Have you written any essays? What topics did you discuss in these essays?
- 3 In your first language, is it appropriate to include your personal reaction in an essay? Why / why not?

4 Attending lectures

4.1 Below are some suggestions to help students understand lectures. Decide which you think are helpful ideas and which are not.

- 1 If the lecturer asks you to read a text that relates to a lecture, make sure you do that.
- 2 If slides are put on a website before a lecture, don't try and read them because they probably won't make much sense.
- 3 When you go to a lecture, it is better to sit at the back so the lecturer can't see you. If you sit at the front, the lecturer may be able to see how much you can or can't understand of the lecture.
- 4 During a lecture, don't try and write down everything. It's better to pay attention and make sense of what the lecturer is saying.
- 5 It is better to accept the fact that you may not understand everything the lecturer says, but, at the same time, try to focus on what you can understand.
- 6 If lecturers invite questions at the end of the lecture, it is better to say nothing. If you ask a question, they will think you are a weak student.

4.2 a  Listen to Maria talk about going to lectures. Which suggestions in 4.1 does she mention?

b Listen again and make notes on the following topics:

- 1 where to sit: _____

- 2 making notes: _____

- 3 listening: _____

- 4 recording lectures: _____



4.3 What can you do after lectures? Below are three study resources that can help you. Discuss together how these resources can help.

Study resource	How can we use this resource?
Pre-lecture reading texts	
Your notes	
Other students	

5 Studying independently on an academic English course

5.1 The box below contains some areas of language that you might want extra practice with when studying academic English. Match these areas to sentences a–f. These are ideas that can help you to make progress in each area.

reading listening speaking writing vocabulary **grammar**

- a Keep a record of structures you normally need in the essays you write. grammar
- b Find a classmate who you can discuss ideas from books or seminars with. _____
- c Find short articles in English on topics which are associated with your area of study, but are not necessary for an essay. _____
- d Try keeping a journal of your reactions to some of the ideas you learn about on your course. _____
- e Make cards with new academic words written on them. Carry these cards around to help you revise these new terms. _____
- f Look for, and listen to, mini-lectures online. _____

5.2 Talk with a partner. Discuss which two of the above ideas seem most useful to you. Think of any extra ideas that you think might help you reach your study goals when studying academic English.

As you work through the units in the book, you will find Study tips that will give you ideas about how to reach your study goals in academic English.

6 Thinking about the role of language in academic English

6.1 Read the text about academic English study. What two points does it make that have not been mentioned so far in this unit?

The study of academic English differs in many ways from the study of general English. This is most clearly seen in the way you practise the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. However, other aspects of English language study do not change. It is still important to study grammar and vocabulary. The fact that there is a strong emphasis on writing in academic English means it is important to be accurate. It is useful to understand how the English language works so that you can use it effectively to communicate your ideas. If not, the person reading your written work could misunderstand what you want to say. It is also important to build up your vocabulary knowledge because academic English often has different vocabulary from general English. You also need to use a greater variety of vocabulary in academic writing so you do not repeat the same words all the time.

6.2 Some key language terms are defined in 1–9. Knowing these terms will be useful as you work through the units in this book. Match the terms to the underlined language in 6.1.

- 1 **noun:** a word that is used to show things or people person
- 2 **verb:** a word that shows actions, events, processes and states _____
- 3 **adjective:** a word that describes a noun _____
- 4 **adverb:** a word that can show the following ideas: time, place, frequency, manner, duration _____
- 5 **pronoun:** a word that substitutes a noun _____
- 6 **preposition:** small words that show the relationship between events or things _____
- 7 **prefix:** letters placed at the beginning of a word that change the meaning of the word _____
- 8 **suffix:** letters that are placed at the end of a word to change the word class, for example, to change a verb into a noun _____
- 9 **collocation:** when two words are normally used together, for example, an adjective that is commonly used with a noun, or a preposition commonly used with a verb _____