

Steps to Academic Writing

Marian Barry



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Marian Barry
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INTRODUCTION

Steps to Academic Writing develops the language resources you already have. I am sure you have written personal letters and emails. This means you can already express yourself in an interesting way in English.

This book shows you how to develop your English for academic writing. You will practise writing academic reports and essays, analysing visual information, and writing university and job applications.

Academic writing skills involve being objective, presenting clear explanations and evaluating ideas. Your work should also sound right in an academic context, so this book focuses on achieving a suitable tone in your writing.

How is *Steps to Academic Writing* organised?

The book is divided into eight units covering different aspects of academic writing. The units are all based on interesting topics and ideas such as environmental problems or scientific research. The level of challenge increases as you progress through the book but you can work on the units in any order – you don't have to work from Unit 1 to Unit 8. However, we suggest you work through each unit from start to finish as the activities develop from model examples at the beginning of the unit to writing your own piece at the end. You will be reminded of grammar, spelling and punctuation rules and have a chance to practise them. By the end of each unit, you will feel more confident about each aspect of academic writing.

How can the book help me achieve academically?

Steps to Academic Writing has been written to prepare you for applying for an English-medium university and the academic writing you will need to do as a student.

Here are some examples:

- Unit 1 will help you learn how to write up an evaluation of a project. Being able to evaluate your work is a sign of academic maturity, and it is expected when you have reached a certain academic level.
- Unit 2 will help you practise producing a questionnaire for a survey and writing a report on a survey.
- Units 3, 4, 5 and 6 will help you develop your essay-writing skills, focusing on different kinds of essays that you might have to write at university.
- Unit 7 will develop your skills in analysing charts, graphs and tables, and increase your understanding of how you can use visual information to enhance your academic writing. There is a language bank at the end of this unit summarising some of the words and phrases you can use when you are analysing visual information.
- Unit 8 will help you develop your CV and personal statement for university entrance. You will also practise applying for a job.



What other skills will I learn?

As well as developing your writing skills, and improving your spelling, punctuation and sentence structure, you will develop strong **thinking skills**. You will see this icon in the margin (see left) where activities will develop your thinking skills.

Will this book help prepare me for English language exams?

Yes. Although it is always important to check the requirements of any exam you are taking, this book will help you develop skills that are often tested in English language exams. For example, the essay units will prepare you well for the IELTS Writing Paper, Task 2. Unit 7 will show you how to describe charts and tables, a skill you need for the IELTS Writing Paper, Task 1.

In terms of exam technique, this book will help you improve your ability to analyse what a typical question requires. If you give yourself a time limit, you can practise planning and drafting answers of the required length in a specific time, including a few minutes for proofreading. This practice will help you manage time in a real exam.

With regard to length, many of the examples of essays in the essay units are around 250–300 words. Writing of this length is long enough to demonstrate good skills, but if you need to write longer answers, the basic structure can easily be expanded. You can find some examples of longer answers in the Answer key (see below).

In particular, the confidence-building approach of the units will help you develop a calm and focused mental attitude, which is very important for success in exams.

Where can I find the Answer key?

The Answer key is included at the back of the book, but it is removeable so your teacher may have removed and stored the answer pages elsewhere. The Answer key contains answers to all the language questions and a selection of model answers to longer writing tasks.

Should I work in a group or on my own?

You do not have to work in a group but you may find it helpful. Your contribution to a group will be valuable, and problem-solving together can be very enjoyable and benefit everyone.

Groupwork can also save time when you are learning. For example, a discussion activity can be split up within a group. One half of the group can discuss the advantages of a topic, say, while the other half explores the disadvantages. Everyone's ideas can then be shared with the whole group.

Language activities can be divided up too, if your teacher agrees, so that there is less for each of you to do. For example, if an activity containing 12 vocabulary questions is shared among four friends, each person would do three questions. Afterwards, you can share your answers to all the questions, and discuss any points you are not sure about. In the end, you should all have 12 accurate answers.

Equally, you can work through the book on your own as self-study. The unit instructions have been carefully written to be as clear and straightforward as possible, so you should have no difficulty following them.

How can I use this book outside my English classes?

If you are working in a group you might want to use this book to prepare for lessons, for example thinking about a topic you are going to study in advance or checking any unusual vocabulary. You can also use this book to review work you have carried out in class. Reflecting on what you have learned and making connections with previous learning is an excellent way to consolidate your understanding.

Many activities in this book make good homework tasks too. Some activities such as the questions at the end of each unit are designed for independent work.

Finally, why not discuss some of the topics in the units with friends and family at home? It is very good to hear their viewpoints. You will also find that explaining your ideas outside class really tests your own understanding of the concepts.

Steps to Academic Writing can be used on its own but it is also suitable for use alongside any high-quality English coursebook. If you need further grammar practice, you can look at the Cambridge University Press website for specific resources that are available to improve your grammar.

Finally ...

Steps to Academic Writing aims to extend and develop your existing knowledge of English so that you are ready to enter academic life. I believe you know far more than you realise. My aim in writing this book is to bring that out.

Good luck

Marian Barry