

# Using an Academic Tone in Writing

- ✓ An academic tone makes writers' work suitable and presentable for college-level assignments. By conducting research and writing formally and neutrally, an author's writing will reflect academic work that connects with the audience and meets the professor's expectations.

## 5 Steps to Writing an Academic Tone

- 1) **Use 3rd Person Only:** Writing in 1st or 2nd person is generally conversational and opinionated instead of well-researched, which is the goal of academic writing. 1<sup>st</sup> person is generally used for personal narratives or essays. 2<sup>nd</sup> person is rarely used, unless requested by the professor, usually for a process essay. Request "Using Appropriate Point of View" handout for more information.
- 2) **Avoid Gender Bias:** Writers should be respectful of people's race, ethnicity, and gender by using the proper labels when necessary. Improper labeling demonstrates a lack of academic style and disregard of formal attention when addressing individuals or groups.
- 3) **Write Actively:** Writers need to write actively and clearly, so the audience does not become confused. When possible, writers should avoid the passive voice, and instead, use the active voice.
- 4) **Write Clearly:** Academic writers often express complex ideas. To eliminate confusion, writers can achieve clarity by removing complicated sentence structures and awkward or unnecessary wordiness that clouds the overall message.
- 5) **Use Proper Diction:** Writers should eliminate slang and text abbreviations from academic writing. Using the appropriate diction to address the audience will increase credibility as an academic.

## An Academic Example

According to **Sova**<sup>1&2</sup> (2004), "Writing clearly takes more effort than speaking clearly, and it can be a more intimidating process" (p.1). The written word is permanent, unlike speech, which is short-lived (unless recorded). Spoken mistakes can be quickly forgotten by an audience. However, once a person sends an email, submits a paper, or delivers a cover letter, errors cannot be edited. Therefore, writing clearly requires practice; it also demands proofreading and editing skills. Indeed, **writers benefit**<sup>3</sup> from improving their writing skills. As Sova notes, writing may be the "first contact with others in many situations, and may thus serve as the basis of their first impression of [someone] (p. 2.) **Sova stresses**<sup>4</sup> the importance of writing clearly because the words on paper inform others of what and how one thinks. No matter how **brilliant**<sup>5</sup> an idea, if it is not expressed clearly, the idea will fall short—and so will the writing.

1. The writer maintained **3rd person point of view**, which made the writing formal and neutral.

2. The writer used only the researcher's last name ("**Sova**"), thus, eliminating gender bias.

3. The writer wrote actively by using clear subjects and active verbs ("**Writers benefit...**").

4. The writer used clear subject/verb sentence structures ("**Sova stresses...**").

5. The writer used appropriate diction: "**brilliant**" is a better word choice than "awesome" because awesome sounds too informal rather than academic.