**How can I make my writing more formal and technical?**

You can change the style of your writing through the way you plan, draft and edit your texts. To make your writing more **formal**:

* Structure your writing into paragraphs with clear *topic sentences*.
* *Avoid contractions* (e.g. didn’t, it’ll). Instead, use the full forms (e.g. did not, it will).
* Choose *formal vocabulary* instead of informal vocabulary. For example, "somewhat" is more formal than "a bit", "offspring" is more formal than "babies", "insufficient" is more formal than "not enough", etc.
* Choose language which is *less intense*, less emotional. For example, instead of strong words like "wonderful", "useless" or "terrible", use more moderate words such as "helpful", "poor", "inadequate" or "problematic". Instead of using absolute positives and negatives like "proof" or "wrong", academic writing often has more cautious or graded evaluations, such as "strong evidence" or "less convincing". (Note: Different disciplines/subject areas allow different levels of intensity. Check the style of books and articles for that discipline/subject.)

To make your writing more **technical**:

* Build up your vocabulary with the *technical terms* which are used in your discipline of study (e.g. linguistics, accounting, psychology), as well as in the specific field/topic of study within that discipline (e.g. phonology within linguistics, taxation within accounting).
* Be careful about the *meaning* of technical terms. Often the same word has a different meaning in another discipline. (For example, the word "discourse" is a technical term in linguistics, as well as in disciplines such as sociology and philosophy. However, "discourse" has different meanings in each discipline, and it even has different meanings *within* linguistics, in different specialist areas.)
* Make sure you understand and use the key *categories and relationships* in your discipline: i.e. the way information and ideas are organized into groups, types and parts. (For example, in Occupational Therapy, clients' activities can be grouped into four areas: *self-maintenance, rest, leisure* and *productivity*. In the discipline of Law, law is separated into two types: *common law* and *statute law*.) The more expert you are in your discipline, the more of these you know and the more you are able to use these relationships to structure your writing, the more technical your writing will be.