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## UNIT 4 TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit is to:

- Give you an overview of the different kinds of academic disciplines or subjects that exist in the world, what kind of knowledge they produce and share, and the kinds of related academic writing they use.
- Help you understand what role you as a student can play in this world of academic writing.
- Equip you to train yourself and enter these academic disciplines by learning the types of academic writing done in your field.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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After having read the previous Unit (Block 1, Unit 3: Academic and Non-Academic Writing), hopefully you feel more comfortable with the idea of what academic writing is, what it contains, and why people do it. In that Unit, we looked at how academic writing is a specialized kind of writing that helps connect academic people (researchers, teachers, students) and enables them to do academic work which primarily involves producing knowledge or research and sharing it. We also talked about how researchers or academicians' study different aspects of the world around us using unique tools and methods in order to produce this knowledge that impacts the world. Most importantly, we also explored how

academic writing is something that helps in both these processes of knowledge production or research as well as that of knowledge sharing.

Now it's time to shift gears and explore the different types of academic writing that you can expect to encounter in academia. In this unit, we will understand what some of the most common types of academic writing are, figure out what role you can play as a student in the world of academic writing, and finally, how you can train yourself to enter these academic disciplines by learning the types of academic writing done in your subject.

So, let's get started!

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## **4.2 A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES AND TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING**

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In this section, you will get a bird's eye view of some predominant academic disciplines, understand what they study in the world, (i.e., what kind of knowledge they produce and share in the world), and learn more about the kinds of academic writings they use to do this. Just like a flying bird is able to get a broad view of the world down below, you too will be able to have a broad understanding or bird's eye view of all that goes on in the world of academia once you have read through this unit.

### **4.2.1 What is an academic discipline?**

An academic discipline, also known as academic "subject" in schools in India, is a distinct branch of knowledge where ideas about specific aspects of the world are produced and shared by research scholars, teachers, and students spread out across various academic institutions. For example, history is an academic discipline or subject where knowledge about past events of human societies is produced and shared by historians or research scholars, teachers, and students who study history. They do so using distinct types of academic writing like critical essays, biographies, and books on history etc.

Based on what kind of things in the world academicians study and what types of academic writing they use to produce and share their knowledge, we can classify all the academic disciplines or subjects that exist in the world. Academic disciplines that have similarities in what they study or how they study are also clubbed into larger categories called academic streams. For example, natural science is an academic stream that consists of academic disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, etc.

In the table below, you will find various types of academic streams, along with the academic disciplines they contain, what they study, and the types of academic writing they use to produce and share knowledge. As you will notice, there are lots of differences as well as similarities in the types of academic writings that are used across disciplines:

## 4.2.2 Types of Academic Disciplines and Types of Academic Writing

Streams	Discipline/ Subjects	What do they study?	Types of Academic Writing They Use
Natural & Applied Sciences	Agriculture	Farming	Research papers (in the form of experiments-based laboratory reports, with the exception of mathematics which uses mathematical proof-based papers), research proposals, literature reviews, case studies, reports etc.
	Biology	Living beings	
	Computer Science	Computers and information technology	
	Chemistry	Atoms, molecules, ions, elements, compounds etc.	
	Engineering	Application of scientific theories	
	Geology	Rocks and other terrestrial elements	
	Mathematics	Numbers and Patterns	
	Medicine	Human and Animal Health	
Social Sciences	Physics	Matter and its motion and behaviour	Research Papers (most commonly data collection-based reports, but can be experiment-based laboratory reports as well), research proposals, literature reviews, case studies, reports etc.
	Anthropology	Behaviour, norms, practices and values of human societies	
	Education	Teacher training, student learning, school and university design and management.	
	Law	Judiciary and laws	
	Political Science	Politics, power, and governments	
	Psychology	Human mind and behaviour	
	Sociology	Behaviour, norms, practices and values of human societies	

Humanities	Art	Fine arts (painting, sculpture etc.) and Performing arts (music, dance, theatre etc.)	Research Papers (in the form of critical essays), literature reviews, research proposals etc.
	Film Studies	Films, TV, Radio, Culture	
	History	Past events of human societies	
	Languages	Hindi, English, Urdu, Spanish etc.	
	Literature	Poems, Novels, Epics etc.	
	Music	Songs	
	Philosophy	Fundamental questions and theories about existence, knowledge, ethics etc.	
Business & Professional Degrees	Accounting	Financial transactions	Research papers (in the form of data collection-based reports, or experiment-based laboratory reports), Professional writings (business plans, marketing plans, management reports, project proposals, project reports, case studies, memos).
	Economics	Behaviour of people engaging in production, consumption, distribution of goods and services	
	Finance	Money and investments	
	Management	Administration of organizations	
	Marketing	Advertisements and Promotions for selling products	
	Tourism and hospitality management	Administration of organizations in tourism sector	
	Vocational studies	Training for specialized jobs like technical expert, beautician, computer operator etc.	

Table 1.0: List of academic disciplines and types of academic writing Source: Adapted from Carter (2007) and Lumen Learning.

Isn't it amazing how humans have developed so many different types of academic disciplines with different areas of specialization and unique types of academic writing? What you see in this table is supposed to give a rough idea about these things. While all the main types of academic writing have been covered here, there are many more types which you might come to know as you grow as an academic writer. Please also keep in mind that this classification is not rigidly followed everywhere. In different academic institutions, you may see different formations of these disciplines while the overarching structure is usually maintained. For example, in some universities "psychology" might come under the Natural Sciences instead of the Social Sciences. Similarly, some places consider "history" to be social sciences and not humanities, while in some places "law" is considered to be a professional degree while in others it is classified as a social science. There are also many other disciplines and subjects that exist in the world but they cannot be included here due to the limited scope and space. For example, within Social Sciences, there are many other disciplines like "gender studies" that can also be added.

Finally, you should also know that these academic disciplines evolve and change over time, with certain disciplines merging into each other or giving rise to new ones. "Gender studies" for example is a new academic discipline that has developed over the last few decades through a mixture of ideas and people from fields like sociology, literature, anthropology, psychology, and law!

Now let's go a little deeper into each of these academic streams to better understand the disciplines they contain as well as the types of academic writing that they use.

#### 4.2.2.1 Natural & Applied Sciences

In all the disciplines that come under the stream of natural and applied sciences, i.e., disciplines like physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, geology, mathematics, and medicine, the focus is on producing knowledge about different aspects of the natural world around us and also to apply that knowledge to produce a range of products that can better serve humanity. To do this, scholars in these disciplines primarily write research papers in the form of experiment-based laboratory reports. These research papers follow the format known as IMRD which stands for Introduction - Methods - Results - Discussion:

##### IMRD style of research papers (Natural & Applied Sciences)

- **I or Introduction:** This includes the context and purpose of the study along with the main research questions;
- **M or Methods:** This includes description of the methods or techniques that will be used to find answers to the research questions. In natural and applied sciences, experiments are the main research methods used;
- **R or Results:** This includes the results that researchers get from the experiments;
- **D or Discussion:** This includes analysis of the results which ultimately leads to answers for the research questions.

Before they actually conduct their research and write their IMRD style research papers, researchers often write research proposals where they lay out their plans for conducting research. This often involves literature reviews where they survey and review existing research in an area to figure out what kind of research they can do. Apart from IMRD style

papers and research proposals, in some scientific disciplines, case studies and reports are also used which involve an in-depth analysis of a particular case or situation from the real world. For example, in the field of medicine, doctors often do case studies on patients where they analyze the history of their symptoms, results of any diagnostic tests that they have undergone and based on this give a diagnosis and method for treatment. The report that they write based on their case study consists of a clear and detailed description of all these steps.

While all disciplines within the natural and applied sciences usually write their research in IMRD style research papers along with research proposals, literature reviews, case-studies and reports, there are variations on the themes and objects of inquiry that each discipline picks up in their research writing. For example, while biologists write research papers describing their study of animals or microorganisms, engineers do so to talk about their study of new technology etc.

#### **4.2.2.2 Social Sciences**

In terms of what they study, the natural sciences and social sciences are obviously very different. While the natural sciences study the natural world, the social sciences study the social world, i.e., the world made up of humans. However, in terms of their approaches towards research as well as the kinds of academic writing they use to do their research, social sciences and the natural and applied sciences have several similarities as well as differences.

In terms of similarities, it's important to note that both the social sciences as well as the natural sciences write their research papers in the IMRD format. Just like the natural sciences, disciplines in the social sciences use research proposals and literature reviews as pre-writing steps to write those papers too. Case studies and reports are also common in the social sciences. There are certain important differences though. While the natural sciences primarily use experiments conducted in laboratories as their main method (the M in IMRD stands for Method, remember?) for collecting data for doing research, the social sciences on the other hand primarily rely on methods like interviews, surveys, and field observations for collecting their data.

Through their analysis of these different types of data, both the natural as well as the social sciences seek to develop systematic and overarching theories or answers which can explain the phenomena that they have observed in the world. However, there is a difference between the outlook of researchers towards the kind of theories or answers they build. While in the pure and applied sciences, the attempt of the researchers is usually to find universal answers to their research questions, i.e., answers that are applicable across the world in most settings, in the social sciences, researchers are usually open to subjectivity, i.e., the idea that the answers they find to their research questions might vary across different social contexts. For example, while an applied science research question like "What medicine works best for reducing fever?" might have an answer that is applicable across major parts of the world, a social science research question like "Which form of government is the most beneficial for its citizens?" will have answers that vary widely across different social contexts. This is not always a very hard or fast rule though and you might find exceptions to this rule in the work of some researchers who try to merge the outlook of the two academic streams in their research.

### 4.2.2.3 Humanities

The Humanities and Social Sciences share some similarities with each other. They both focus on the study of human and social phenomena like art, languages, rituals, literature, social norms and values etc. However, the difference between them lies in the fact that while the Social Sciences follow a more scientific approach to study these things, the Humanities follow a more critical or criticism-based approach to studying them. This difference in approach towards research also gets reflected in the kind of academic writing that they do.

Let us first look at their differences in terms of their different approaches to research. By saying that the Social Sciences follow a scientific approach, what is meant is that social sciences rely on gathering data by observing real people and their lives in the world, based on which they try to develop systematic and overarching theories which can explain what they observe. The Humanities on the other hand usually don't directly observe real people and their lives, but rather look at how those people and their lives have been preserved and reflected in the form of art, music, literature, film and ideas etc. So, for example, in order to study a concept like "gender", while a social scientist might go to a group of people and interview them about their experience of gender, a humanities scholar on the other hand, would probably use poems, novels, or films and study how the concept of gender has been represented in them. Next in terms of analysis too, while a social scientist might rely on tools like statistics to find patterns in their data, scholars in the Humanities prefer something called criticism instead. While in common language we tend to think of the word "criticism" as something negative, in the academic world, it refers to a particular form of knowledge production which involves analysis, interpretation, and judgement about the form and content of the art, music, literature, film or ideas etc. that a researcher is studying. Finally, in terms of the differences in the methods of research between the Social Sciences and Humanities, the Humanities are also known for being very open to immense subjectivity in their criticisms, i.e., scholars in these disciplines usually accept the idea that the kind of research questions they ask will have many different answers rather than a single correct one. For example, instead of there being a single correct answer to a humanities research question like "why did Rabindranath Tagore's poetry have such a lasting impact on India?", a very large number of answers can be produced depending on which scholar or student is answering the question.

These differences between the Social Sciences and the Humanities are also reflected in the kinds of research papers that are written in them. In the Humanities, the research papers are primarily written in the form of critical essays instead of the IMRD style papers that are common in Social Sciences. In this type of critical essay writing, scholars usually have more freedom to arrange their writing according to a structure that best suits their style of thinking instead of following a fixed format (like the IMRD format followed in the pure sciences and social sciences). Apart from the critical essay type of research paper, disciplines in the Humanities do use research proposals and literature reviews as well, just like the Pure Sciences and Social Sciences do.

While these differences are important to understand, it is also important to note that the differences mentioned here between the Social Sciences and Humanities are also not always very rigid and you will find lots of cases of researchers and students mixing the methods and types of academic writing followed in the two academic streams to produce and share their knowledge.

#### 4.2.2.4 Business & Professional Degrees

In all the disciplines that come under the stream of Business, i.e. disciplines like Accounting, Finance, Management, Marketing, Economics etc. the focus is on producing knowledge about different aspects of the business and economic world. To do this, two major kinds of academic writings are usually done. First, in terms of Research papers, scholars in these disciplines use both IMRD style research papers as well as critical essays. Like the Pure and Applied sciences they also conduct experiments in laboratories, but like the Social Sciences, they also collect data from the world by observing business related phenomenon. Apart from research papers, people in these disciplines also do a lot of professional writing in the form of project proposals, project reports, management and sales reports, case studies and memos that are required to run businesses. Case studies and reports are especially important in these fields. This is especially true for professional fields like tourism, hospitality, management, and vocational studies which are heavily focused towards real world businesses.

#### Now take a few deep breaths...

The idea behind sharing these details about what happens in all the disciplines is not to overwhelm you. Nor will you be expected to do all these kinds of writing as a student! The idea of sharing this is to simply help you understand the wonderful world that you are entering into and what all possibilities lie within it. Think of it almost like a video game. All these paths are open in front of you and you can choose which ones you want to take! While you will primarily be doing only the kinds of academic writing that happen in your subject, knowing about what happens in other disciplines will enrich your mind and enable you to think more creatively and rigorously. Also please keep in mind that you will not immediately be expected to write research papers in your subject! That process takes time. So does the process of learning about how knowledge is produced in your own discipline as well as other disciplines. Slowly, as you progress through your college degree, you will learn some of these types of academic writing and knowledge production mentioned above, in your classes in more detail.

#### Check your progress 1

Based on Table 1.0 write down the name of the academic discipline that you are studying along with what aspect of the world it studies and the kinds of academic writings that people in that field use to conduct their research work. If your academic field is not present in this table, then search the internet, or ask your teachers and friends to find answers to these questions for your particular field.

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**Let's explore 1:** Go to a website called MICUSP or Michigan Corpus of Upper Level Student papers (<https://elicorpora.info/>). Here on the left side, you can choose an academic discipline as well as a type of writing. Choose the academic discipline that you are a part of or one that you are interested in and select any type of academic writing also. You will now see towards the center of the website different examples of student writing in this discipline from the University of Michigan in USA. Click on any of them and read them. Keep doing this whenever you get time to get an idea of the different kinds of academic writing that students do in these different disciplines.

In the next section now, we will look at what role you as students can play in all these disciplines with their different types of academic writing.

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## 4.3 STUDENTS' ROLES IN ACADEMIA

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As students you are the very heart and soul of academia! Without you, the academic disciplines wouldn't exist. So, when you write an assignment, know that you are doing important work. Instead of thinking about yourself passively as just consumers of knowledge that other people create, you should start thinking of yourselves as inventors or co-creators of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.

**Students' role in academia = inventors of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.**

Let's look at all the ideas in this definition closely now.

### 4.3.1 Inventors of Knowledge



Source: [www.eatmedia.blogspot.com](http://www.eatmedia.blogspot.com)

David Bartholomae, a scholar of writing studies, describes the role of students in the world of academic writing really well. In his essay, "Inventing the University", he says that "every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion— invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (Bartholomae 4).

Why does Bartholomae feel that each time a student writes something for their academic disciplines, they are "inventing" the university or a branch of it? Isn't invention something that very senior researchers do? Not really. This is the change in thinking that Bartholomae is trying to bring about. While we usually think of inventing or producing new knowledge as something that only senior researchers do after decades of studying in an academic discipline, Bartholomae suggests that even young students do mini-inventions each time they do

academic writing. How does that happen? Let's look at how Bartholomae explains this further.

### 4.3.2 Balancing Conventions and Innovations

Bartholomae says that students “have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline” (Bartholomae 5). According to him, when you write an assignment for any of your courses, you don't have to just repeat and replicate what your teachers say. Rather, you need to find a “compromise” or balance between conventions and innovations. Let's look at what each of these means below:

- **Conventions:** What he calls “requirements of convention” or the “history of a discipline” mean the ways of writing and thinking that are normally followed in your subjects which you will see in your textbooks, in the styles of teaching of your teachers, in the notes of senior students, as well as examples you find on the internet. These have been followed for so long, that they have become almost like rules for writing in different disciplines.
- **Innovations:** What he calls “personal history” or “idiosyncrasy” means your own thoughts or personality or ideas that come from your own life and experiences that can help to fuel creativity and innovations in your writing.

This may seem strange to you. In most schools, we are taught to simply rote-learn the “correct” answers from our books or the notes that teachers give us. The better we repeat what we have learnt, the higher marks we get. When we enter college though, that idea changes and slowly we have to transform ourselves from being only passive consumers of knowledge to becoming active producers of knowledge. To make this shift, or to “invent” in our writing as Bartholomae recommends, we have to balance conventions and innovations. How do you do this kind of balancing between conventions and innovations?

Here's an example. Look at this unit that you are reading. The “convention” in college textbooks, is that they should only have lots of text without many engaging images or other forms of visual representation. Visual representations are usually used only in school textbooks. Based on my “personal history” I love reading books that have lots of pictures. Pictures make the books so much more fun to read! Because of this, I decided to include some images in this unit too. I hope that you are enjoying them!

This is how I found a balance between conventions (text-based college chapters) and innovation (visual representation) to write this unit. How did I decide what kind of innovation to use? I thought of you, my readers! I imagined what would appeal to college students who are just about to start on their college journeys. I also looked back on my own college days. Based on this imagination, I decided that including some images would be fun and would not cause any negative impact on my audience. The key thing to keep in mind while balancing conventions and innovation is to think about who your audience is and what their reaction to your innovations could be. In some situations, sticking only to conventions is best (like in school board exams), while in some cases it is recommended to include some innovations (like in some of your course assignments, if your teachers encourage innovations). The big

question now comes up — how do you learn to balance conventions and innovations?

### **4.3.3 Becoming an Apprentice**

To do this balancing, think of yourself as entering into an apprenticeship in a particular discipline.

#### **4.3.3.1 Who is an apprentice?**

**Apprentices are trainees who learn by getting a mixture of practical experience and theoretical study in a field.**

Think about how people become tailors or carpenters or goldsmiths. All these professions involve a mixture of study and practical experience. People wanting to become a tailor, or carpenter, or a goldsmith will study their respective areas and try to get training experience by working with seniors as well as other trainees like them in the field. In many of these fields, this is how knowledge is passed from generation to generation. Similarly, you can think of academic writing as a kind of apprenticeship or training in knowledge production that is available to you in different academic subjects. As you gradually develop expertise in the different types of academic writing followed in a discipline, you also end up developing expertise in the kind of knowledge it produces and also learn how to balance conventions and innovations.

#### **4.3.3.2 Levels of apprenticeship**

There are many levels of academic apprenticeship. As an undergraduate student you will initially do academic writings like exams, assignments, reports, reviews, summaries etc. so that you are able to familiarize yourself with the central ideas in your subject. These kinds of academic writings help apprentices learn the basic tools or conventions of their trade. What you learnt about arguments in Block 1, Unit 3 will help you in writing those. Gradually as you progress in your degree, you might also be writing term papers, or projects, or maybe even research proposals and papers. Through these other kinds of academic writing, you will slowly develop your own ideas on a topic and share them with your teachers and classmates. Whatever ideas you develop here, could also be adapted to digital media forms like podcasts, videos, text messages, blogposts etc., if you are interested and have the time to share your findings and learnings with the larger world. Here you will need to show a lot of innovation on how you present your ideas to the general public. If you are able to pursue higher studies then you will conduct full-fledged research, write a thesis or a dissertation which is essentially a very long research paper where you learn how to balance conventions (existing research) and innovations (the new research that you wish to do). The deeper you go into your apprenticeship into academia, the stronger your academic writing and researching skills will gradually become and the more you will learn how to balance innovations with conventions. Even if you decide to get a job after your undergraduate degree, many skills that you learn in academic writing will come in handy and help you develop skills of critical thinking and communicating effectively, which are useful in all spheres of life.

### 4.3.3.3 Mistakes are good!

A very important idea to keep in mind through the image of apprenticeship is also to remember that the learning journey of apprentices involves making lots of mistakes. In fact, if you aren't making any mistakes that means you aren't really learning much. So don't expect to get everything right from the very start. Look at all your mistakes positively, and see how you can learn from them. Think of each writing you do as an experiment in trying to balance conventions and innovations. Some of these will be successful and some of these will involve lots of mistakes that will help you learn. Here it is important to remember what Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric light bulb said when asked about all the time he failed to invent the lightbulb — “I have not failed 10,000 times”, he said, “I’ve successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work.”

What can you do to become a good apprentice? This will be answered in the next section where we look at a diary of reflections on academic writing that you can keep throughout college years.

### 4.3.4 Diary of Reflections on Academic Writing



Do you know what is an important, but largely hidden secret of good writing in particular and good learning in general? The answer is “reflection”. Remember what we talked about reflection in Block 1, Unit 1? There we had defined reflection as “the act of introspecting on what you read and observe. It involves asking how and why things happen the way they do and cultivating a deeper engagement with what we read and observe”. To reflect on any activity that you do in your life, we asked you to consider the following questions:

- What do I feel when I do this activity?
- Why do I engage with this activity?
- What significance does it have for me?
- How do I speak about this activity to other people?

- How do others speak about this activity?
- Do I agree or disagree with them?
- Would I like to do it differently?

You can apply this reflection activity to the academic writing that you do through your college years and beyond. This is one of the best ways to develop a deeper awareness of the various types of academic writing integral in your college life. What follows are some suggestions on how you can do this.

**What to write about in your reflection diary?** Whenever you come across a new writing assignment, write the name of the type of academic writing it is in your diary. Also write about the unique features or conventions that that writing has. Here is a list of questions that you can use to do this:

- Who is this type of academic writing being written for i.e., who is the audience of this piece of writing?
- What purpose does it serve?
- What kind of content is required for it?
- What kind of structure do you need to follow?
- What kind of words and sentences are required for it?
- Is there an example of it that you can find somewhere on the internet to get a better sense of how to write it?
- What process or steps do you need to follow to write it?
- Is there any kind of creative innovation that you can do with it?
- What was your experience while writing it?
- Did you enjoy it or not? Was it easy or difficult?
- What uses could this writing have in your future?
- Could it be helpful in other courses or education that you enroll in?
- Could it be helpful in the kind of jobs you take up later on? Outside of education and careers, could it also help you do something socially?
- Do you have any other thoughts or reflections to add?

As the entries in your notebook grow, also think about what connections exist between these various types of writing. Remember how in Unit 1 we spoke about how after we reflect on various things, it is also important to connect them into some sort of a coherent narrative? That is what you have to ultimately do with your reflections in your academic writing diary also. Whenever you come across a new type of writing, think about how you can apply the skills of writing that you already know to it. Finally, do you have any other thoughts or reflections to add? It doesn't need to be all serious! You can also write honest and funny thoughts here. Feel free to also draw pictures or innovate in your reflection diary.

Here is an example of what such an entry would look like in my notebook for a type of writing called "Summary" that we spoke about in Unit 1 earlier. Summaries are used in all disciplines and are an important part of all the writings that we looked at earlier, like research papers or reports.

## **My Diary of Reflections on Academic Writing**

### **Sample Entry # 1**

Type of Academic Writing: **Summary**

Audience: Myself and my teacher

Purpose: To improve my ability to remember key ideas of a reading or essay that I have read.

Content: A condensation of the main points in a reading or essay

Structure: Includes some context about who the author of the reading is, the title of the reading, as well as the main points or ideas in it.

Type of words and sentences: It requires me to rephrase key ideas from the reading in my own words. To do this, using sentences with reporting verbs like “The author said that \_\_\_\_\_”; “The author argued that \_\_\_\_\_”; “The author claimed that \_\_\_\_\_” is quite helpful.

Examples and lessons from the internet: On searching “how to write a summary” on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), I found a very helpful video which helped me understand this type of academic writing very well. Here is the link to it: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Brre8LmXo8c&ab\\_channel=jilljitsu81](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Brre8LmXo8c&ab_channel=jilljitsu81)

Process required to write it: First I will need to read the essay and make notes and underline important points. Then I will need to list down all the important points on a page along with the name of the author, book, and the year in which it was written. After this, I will have to connect all the points in sentences written in a paragraph. At the top, I will add a heading, which will be something like “Summary of \_\_\_\_\_” and write the name of the book or essay in the blank.

Possibility for creativity: Depends on the course for which it is being written. In some courses, for example, summaries can be written as a letter to a friend, where you summarize a book or a reading for your friend to explain it to them. This would be an innovation! However in some courses, such creativity is not encouraged. It is a tricky issue trying to understand where creativity will be appreciated and where it is best to stick to traditional ways of writing. I think it will take time for me to learn this.

My experience of writing it: I found it to be a little enjoyable. At the beginning it used to be difficult, but slowly, it got easy.

Uses of it: Overtime I have come to find this type of writing very useful. If I write a summary of every reading or essay that I do for all my classes, I have all that information ready whenever I have to give exams. I also think that summary writing could be useful when I get a job later on and have to note down main ideas that I learn at my workplace. I think it can also help me bring about some positive social change. Whenever I come across a book or a reading that is very insightful, I can quickly summarise it and share the summary with my friends and family on Whatsapp to help them also learn along with me.

Connections to other kinds of writing: When I started writing research papers and reports, I realised that many of them include a section called “Survey of Literature” or “Literature

Review” where I had to provide an overview of the various other kinds of research that has already been done on the topic on which I am writing. There, I had to summarise different research papers that I found on the area. My knowledge of summaries became very useful there.

Any other interesting thoughts: In the future, could summary writing be possible by computers? Like if we put a book in a software, could the software tell us what the summary is? What if I could invent a software like that! Wow, what a great business idea :)

**Note:** When you are creating such entries in your notebook it is absolutely normal to not know a lot about different kinds of writing. This is what apprenticeship is all about. Nobody is born with all this knowledge. We learn about it slowly as we engage with new kinds of writings in college. Here are a few resources that will really help you. Whenever you are creating an entry for a type of writing in your notebook, go and search on these websites to find answers to your questions:

- The WAC Clearinghouse <https://wac.colostate.edu/>
- Online Writing Lab, Purdue University <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- A book called “They Say/I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing” by Graff and Birkenstien. If you can’t find the whole book, then you can also go to this link to download a few important ideas from the book:  
[https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout\\_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf](https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf)
- For great examples of student writing in different disciplines, you can go to the MICUSP that we looked at in Let’s Explore #1 <https://elicorpora.info/>

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## 4.4 LET US SUM UP

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These are the points that we have covered:

1. An academic discipline, also known as academic “subject” in schools in India, is a distinct branch of knowledge where ideas about specific aspects of the world are produced and shared by research scholars, teachers, and students spread out across various academic institutions. For example, history is an academic discipline or subject where knowledge about past events of human societies is produced and shared by historians or research scholars, teachers, and students who study history. They do so using distinct types of academic writing like critical essays, biographies, and books on history etc.
2. An academic stream is a collection of academic disciplines. There are four main streams into which most of the academic disciplines of the world can be classified: natural and applied sciences, social sciences, humanities, business and professional degrees.
3. Each of the disciplines in these streams uses distinct types of academic writing.
4. In terms of the main types used, natural and applied sciences use IMRD or Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion type of research papers with experiments being the main method that they follow to produce knowledge. They also use research

proposals, literature reviews, case studies, and reports.

5. The social sciences use the IMRD style paper too but in terms of methods they primarily use interviews, surveys, and field observations. They use literature reviews, research proposals, case studies and reports too.
6. In the humanities, criticism based research papers or critical essay papers are the most commonly used type of writing. Research proposals and literature reviews are also used there.
7. In business and professional degrees, a mixture of IMRD style papers (with both laboratory experiments as well as interviews and surveys) as well as critical essay papers are used. These fields also use a range of professional writings like business plans, marketing plans, management reports, project proposals, project reports, case studies and memos.
8. Students' role in academia is to be inventors of knowledge who balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as apprentices in the world of academia.
9. To become an inventor of knowledge who can balance conventions and innovations in their academic writing and work as an apprentice, it is useful to keep a diary of reflections on academic writing.

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## 4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

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To further develop your academic writing skills here are some great sources that you are recommended to browse through:

- The WAC Clearinghouse <https://wac.colostate.edu/>
- Online Writing Lab, Purdue University <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- A book called “They Say/I Say: Moves that Matter in Academic Writing” by Graff and Birkenstien. If you can't find the whole book, then you can also go to this link to download a few important ideas from the book:  
[https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout\\_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf](https://spscc.edu/sites/default/files/imce/students/LSS/Handout_They%20Say%20I%20Say%20templates%20all.pdf)
- For great examples of student writing in different disciplines, you can go to the MICUSP that we looked at in Let's Explore #1 <https://elicorpora.info/>

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## 4.6 WORKS CITED

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## **4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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All the activities in this unit require you to write answers to them by reflecting on your own experiences.

