

# Stylish Academic Writing

Your lecturer  
Libusa van de Pavert

1

“They seemed to be researchers trying to impress other researchers with their jargon, and with their language, and with their methodology.”

2

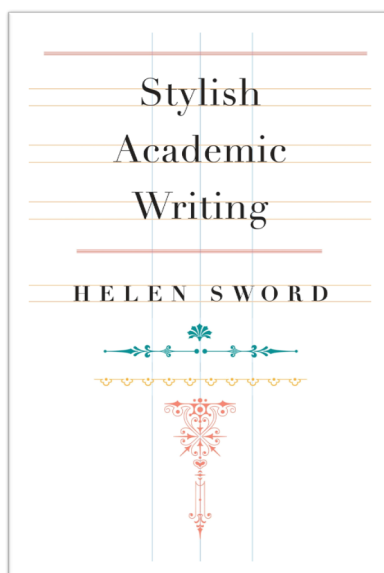
What are the characteristics of well-written papers?

And what makes a paper engaging and a pleasure to read?

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	Personal Pronouns	Unique/ hybrid structure	Engaging title	Engaging opening	> 6% common abstract nouns	> 4% it, this, that, there	> 4% be-verbs
Medicine	92 ●	0	1 .	0	18 ●	0	16 ●
Evolutionary Biology	100 ●	10 .	11 ●	2 .	54 ●	6 .	14 ●
Computer Science	82 ●	92 ●	4 .	8 .	36 ●	10 .	26 ●
Higher Education	54 ●	70 ●	19 ●	10 .	78 ●	6 .	2 .
Psychology	84 ●	58 ●	14 ●	18 ●	60 ●	30 ●	16 ●
Anthropology	88 ●	76 ●	31 ●	28 ●	30 ●	12 .	12 .
Law	68 ●	96 ●	16 ●	24 ●	54 ●	20 ●	4 .
Philosophy	92 ●	74 ●	35 ●	46 ●	32 ●	66 ●	50 ●
History	40 ●	96 ●	53 ●	58 ●	16 .	18 ●	4 .
Literary Studies	96 ●	92 ●	77 ●	52 ●	20 .	14 .	0

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

### 1. Personal pronouns and language

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language

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Although standard statistical methods are available for incorporating measurement error and other sources of variation, they are not commonly applied, and they have rarely been considered in the context of phylogenetic statistics...

Insects suck, chew, parasitize, bore, store, and even cultivate their foods to a highly degree of specialization.

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title

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The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales  
Oliver Sacks (1985)

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The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales  
Oliver Sacks (1985)

The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a  
Universe without Design  
Richard Dawkins (1986)

11

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales  
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The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a  
Universe without Design  
Richard Dawkins (1986)

Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of  
Necessity: Problems with Using Long Words Needlessly  
Daniel M. Oppenheimer, Applied Cognitive Psychology 20: 139–156 (2006)

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples
7. Careful use of jargon

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples
7. Careful use of jargon
8. Non-standard structure

17

Title	Relationships among Structural Diversity, Informal Peer Interactions and Perceptions of the Campus Environment
Section Headings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Background</li> <li>2. Research Questions</li> <li>3. Research Method             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Conceptual Model</li> <li>3.2 Data Sources</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Measures</li> <li>5. Data Analysis</li> <li>6. Results</li> </ol>

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Title	Solving #SAT Using Vertex Covers
Section Headings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction</li> <li>2. Sequential Recursive Petri Nets             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Definitions</li> <li>2.2 Expressivity of SRPNs</li> <li>2.3 Analysis of SRPNs</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Recursive Petri Nets             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Definitions</li> <li>3.2 An Illustrative Example</li> <li>3.3 Expressivity of RPNs</li> <li>3.4 Analysis of RPNs</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Conclusion</li> </ol>

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

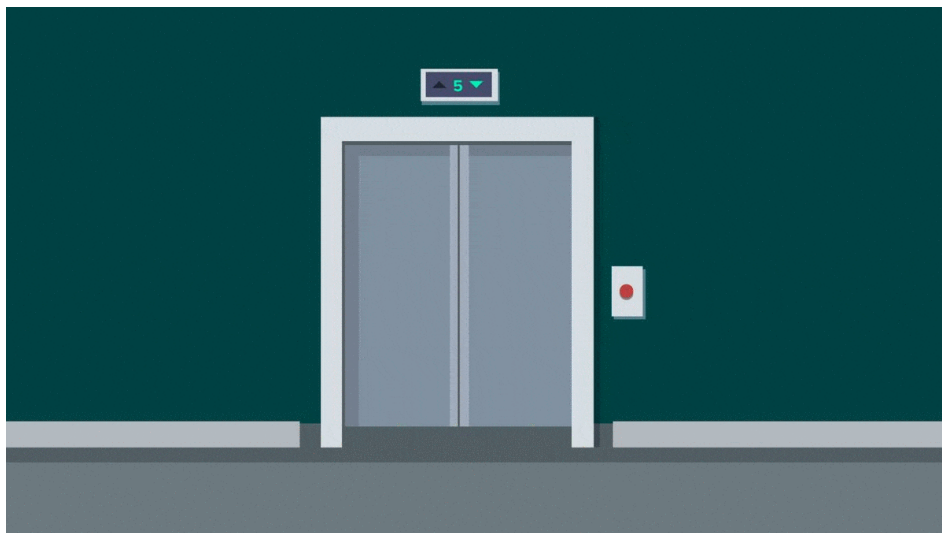
1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples
7. Careful use of jargon
8. Non-standard structure
9. Careful use of citations

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples
7. Careful use of jargon
8. Non-standard structure
9. Careful use of citations
10. Concrete abstract

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## 11 Elements of Stylish Writing

1. Personal pronouns and language
2. Concrete language
3. Engaging title
4. Effective first paragraph
5. Telling a story
6. Using examples
7. Careful use of jargon
8. Non-standard structure
9. Careful use of citations
10. Concrete abstract
11. Creative expression

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### The Test

Is your writing flabby or fit? Enter a text sample of at least 100 words, then click "take the test" to see your diagnosis. (Don't like the diet and fitness theme? Click the Settings wheel to change it). To shape up your sentences and sharpen your style, start your customized writing workout [here](#).

Helen Sword is a poet, scholar, master teacher, and international expert on academic, professional, and creative writing across the disciplines. Her books, articles, and online tools have empowered writers around the world to write more clearly, confidently, prolifically, and with greater pleasure.

Born and raised in Southern California, Helen received her doctorate in comparative literature from Princeton University and has lived since 2001 in New Zealand, where she is a Professor of Humanities at the University of Auckland and runs a private consulting company, Helen Sword Consulting Ltd. She is the author of books including Stylish Academic Writing (Harvard UP, 2012), The Writer's Diet (Chicago UP, 2016), and Air & Light & Time and Space: How Successful

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- be-verbs
- zombie nouns
- prepositions
- ad-words
- it, this, that, there

**LEAN**  
This sample has 320 eligible words.

Helen Sword **is** a poet, scholar, master teacher, and **international** expert **on** **academic**, **professional**, and **creative** writing **across** the disciplines. Her books, articles, and online tools have empowered writers **around** the world **to** write more **clearly**, **confidently**, **prolifically**, and **with** greater pleasure.

Born and raised **in** Southern California, Helen received her doctorate **in** **comparative** literature **from** Princeton University and has lived since 2001 **in** New Zealand, where she **is** a Professor **of** Humanities **at** the University **of** Auckland and runs a private consulting company, Helen Sword Consulting Ltd. She **is** the author **of** books including Stylish Academic Writing (**Harvard UP**, 2012); The Writer's Diet (**Chicago UP**, 2016); and Air & Light & Time and Space: How Successful Academics Write (**Harvard UP**, 2017) and the creator **of**

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## The Five Categories

1. be-verbs

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## The Five Categories

1. be-verbs

2. zombie nouns or nominalizations

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## The Five Categories

1. be-verbs
2. zombie nouns or nominalizations
3. prepositions

... a book **of** case studies **about** the efficiency **of** involving multiple stakeholders **in** discussions **about** health care ...

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## The Five Categories

1. be-verbs
2. zombie nouns or nominalizations
3. prepositions
4. ad-words

Developing an **accurate** understanding of the **multiple** factors influencing students' outcomes, and particularly the role of **specific** community college practices in this process, is a **crucial** of **institutional** and state leaders seek to improve **educational** attainment of community college students.

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## The Five Categories

1. be-verbs
2. zombie nouns or nominalizations
3. prepositions
4. ad-words
5. it, this, that, there

It can be shown **that** ...  
Some have seen **this** as evidence **that** ...  
It is now generally understood **that** ...

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### The Test

Is your writing flabby or fit? Enter a text sample of at least 100 words, then click "take the test" to see your diagnosis. (Don't like the diet and fitness theme? Click the Settings wheel to change it). To shape up your sentences and sharpen your style, start your customized writing workout [here](#).

Many different and overlapping causes have been identified for early weight loss in ALS. The more obvious cause is the reduction of food intake related to bulbar disturbances, either as presenting symptoms or appearing during the course of the disease. In these cases weight loss may be a very early phenomenon and precede the diagnosis of ALS. However, dietary imbalance is clearly not the only mechanism causing weight loss in ALS. There are indeed indications of the presence of metabolic problems in ALS, since it has been found that some patients even with appropriate caloric intake lose weight. An explanation is the observation that about 50% of ALS patients have an increased energy expenditure compared with controls persisting over the course of the disease, which could be present already in the pre-symptomatic phases of the disease. Finally, it has been found that a possible

run the test

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get the app

- be-verbs
- zombie nouns
- prepositions
- ad-words
- it, this, that, there

**HEART ATTACK!**  
This sample has 242 eligible words.

Many different and overlapping causes have been identified for early weight loss in ALS. The more obvious cause is the reduction of food intake related to bulbar disturbances, either as presenting symptoms or appearing during the course of the disease. In these cases weight loss may be a very early phenomenon and precede the diagnosis of ALS. However, dietary imbalance is clearly not the only mechanism causing weight loss in ALS. There are indeed indications of the presence of metabolic problems in ALS, since it has been found that some patients even with appropriate caloric intake lose weight. An explanation is the observation that about 50% of ALS patients have an increased energy expenditure compared with controls persisting over the course of the disease, which could be present already in the pre-symptomatic phases of the disease. Finally, it has been found that a possible central mechanism of weight loss in at least a

30