Academic Writing Tips

• Stay in third person

With academic writing, aim to be consistent with tense and stay in third person. This improves the flow of the writing and encourages a more formal tone. Learn to identify use of second person (you, your) and first person (I, my, me, us, we) in your own writing and change it to third person (he, she, they, their).

An easy way to fix second person is to specify who you mean instead. Otherwise, the reader does not necessarily know who ‘you’ is referring to.

Second to Third:

It is important for you to be cognizant of these symptoms in your practice.

➢ It is important for physical therapists to be cognizant of these symptoms in their practice.

Sometimes your instructor might specify it is okay to use first person, but for more formal assignments or research papers, try to avoid it.

First to Third:

I think it is important to continue research in the future.

➢ It seems more research is needed on this topic.

I always treat each patient based on their individual needs.

➢ Nurses should treat each patient based on their individual needs.
• Avoid colloquial language and clichés

With academic writing, and especially for the health sciences, it is best to avoid colloquial or conversational wording and clichés. Often this tends to be vague and weakens the writing. Instead, aim for a more formal, professional tone. Rather than using a cliché, be more specific about what you mean to ensure clarity.

Conversational/Cliché:
This research has opened the door for many respiratory therapists.

Better:
This research has allowed many respiratory therapists to make more informed decisions based on the patient’s history.

Conversational/Cliché:
Educating the patient is a game changer.

Better:
The dental hygienist should educate their patients on proper flossing and brushing to prevent caries.

• Save time for revision and proofreading

Aim for concise writing by deleting unnecessary words.

Note areas where more details may be needed.

Vary sentence length. After a long sentence, it can help maintain clarity to use a shorter sentence. If a longer sentence seems to be a bit confusing, you could improve the flow by breaking it up into two shorter sentences.

Properly document sources with both in-text citations in the body of your paper and references at the end of your paper.