

FORMAL AND INFORMAL LANGUAGE

Formal academic writing is quite different from informal spoken English. The differences can best be seen from a number of examples. In general, informal spoken English contains a number of colloquialisms (conversational expressions) that are inappropriate for formal written English. It is important not to mix the styles.

Written academic English will **not** normally contain the following:

Contractions

✘ **INCORRECT**
it didn't
they've

✔ **CORRECT**
it did not
they have

Hesitation Fillers

✘ **INCORRECT**
er
um
well

Personal Pronouns

✘ **INCORRECT**
I think this is an effective plan.
You put the chemicals in the test tube.
We used two different methods research.

✔ **CORRECT**
This could be an effective plan.
The chemicals **are put** in the test tube.
There were two different methods of research.

Personal pronouns are sometimes used, but are often avoided by means of a modal verb (*could, might* etc.), an impersonal word such as *it* or *there*, or a verb in the passive voice.

Informal/Imprecise Words

✘ **INCORRECT**
lots of
nice
big
things
like

✔ **CORRECT**
many
excellent, pleasant
large
reasons, problems
such as