



# STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

## How do you write an academic text Part I

### Basic skills

Through writing papers, essays, reports and theses, you are preparing yourself in order to be able to participate in the academic debate. That is ultimately why you are doing a university study: through research, you acquire knowledge and new insights that you want to share with other academics. You do this almost always in writing via articles in academic journals or via publications on the internet. Readers both nationally and internationally can critically reflect on what you have thought up and react to that. Through that discussion, you arrive at new insights. Writing is, therefore, an essential part of your study and your future job.

*TIP*: Look at the interview (in Dutch) with Jose Plug, the former College /Graduate School Director of Dutch Studies on the website [www.taalwinkel.nl](http://www.taalwinkel.nl) about the role of writing during your study.

### What is academic writing?

Different - mostly higher - requirements are set for academic writing than for texts that you wrote at secondary school or during your undergraduate degree programme with an applied emphasis (*hbo-opleiding = applied sciences*). Writing these academic texts is a skill that you must develop during your study. You learn the conventions that apply to your study in order to construct an argument, as well as the conventions to be able to technically provide different kinds of texts. Moreover, you need to ensure that readers can always ascertain where certain information comes from. Your piece can be the motivation for another person to do further research. He or she must be able to see your sources and be

able to retrieve them quickly. In addition, it must always be possible to check if you have correctly adopted information. In that way, you prevent plagiarism, which is a serious offence in the academic world.

*TIP* Read and examine a few articles from scientific journals that have set the tone for your study. This will enable you to gain an impression of the subjects that are being written about, but also how such a text is constructed, what type of words are used and which writing style they adopt.

### What do you need to be able to do at the beginning of the study?

When you first start your study, you still often need to (partly) develop this academic writing style. You learn which writing style you need to use, how you should formulate a problem, make a good structure and how you should refer to literature. A certain entry level is expected of you. Below you will find which requirements apply for that level.

- You can write a reasonably correct text about a subject that interests you. It can occur that the connections in longer texts are sometimes not completely clear.
- You can make an understandable summary of a longer article from your own field of interest or use information from various texts, such as newspapers, the internet and brochures for an assignment.
- You can write reports which contain the main elements of a progress meeting of the progress of a project, or of an internship.
- You can write a text in which you support a position with argumentation.
- You can process information and arguments from a number of sources into a text.

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mind mapping classes

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self-knowledge CHALLENGE

# STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

flexible thinking EFFECTIVENESS

learning styles repetitions

making connections exams

**TIP** Do you still find one or more of the above-mentioned tasks difficult? Look at the following language tips on the site [www.taalwinkel.nl](http://www.taalwinkel.nl) (which you

*Taaltip (Language tip) 131 'Samenvatten' (Summarising)*  
*Taaltip 815 'Een argumentatieschema maken' (Making an argumentation framework)*  
*Taaltip 808 'Een betoog schrijven' (Writing an argument)*  
*Taaltip 82 'Literatuur verwerken' (Processing litera-*

## Which requirements are set concerning your written use of language?

In order to be able to study at a university, you must have a command of Dutch up to pre-university education level (Dutch VWO level). What do you need to be able to do for this?

### Writing style

A correct writing style is a difficult questions for many students at the start of the study programme. Through your study, the texts that you read and the Academic Skills course, you will gradually learn, however, what a good academic style is. At the beginning of your study programme, we expect that you will, in any case, be able to formulate ideas in a clear, professional and neutral manner. Be careful to avoid informal language and popular slang. Don't write sentences that are too long and avoid unnecessary words. Writing is often

**TIP** Do you want to know more about your own writing style? Do the style test (in Dutch) that can be found on [www.taalwinkel.nl](http://www.taalwinkel.nl) under the option *Taalhulp* (Language help).

about scrapping information.

### Vocabulary

The larger your vocabulary is, the less problems you will have reading and expressing yourself meticulously.

A large vocabulary is one of the greatest predictors of academic success, that is to say: the chance that you will be successful in your study is largely dependant on the size of your vocabulary. You should therefore actively work on increasing this. If more than 5% of the words in a text cause problems for you, then it is

**TIP** Read a lot, look up all word you don't know and make notes of these. Read professional journals in order to master the jargon of your study.

already a difficult task to read the text.

### Language use

Meticulousness is an important characteristic of an academic work attitude. That mean that you also need to deal meticulously with your language and be able to properly apply the rules. Your texts should contain few to no grammatical mistakes. The same applies for spelling mistakes. You are also expected to be able to make careful use of punctuation such as full stops,

**TIP** There are a number of tests you can do (in Dutch) under *Taalhulp* (Language help) of [www.taalwinkel.nl](http://www.taalwinkel.nl) in order to see if your level of grammar, spelling and punctuation is sufficient. You will also find tips and information about these subjects on this site.

commas and semicolons.

### Layout and presentation

A text may contain good content, but if there are lots of mistakes and inaccuracies in it, the reader will quickly become irritated and have a bad impression of the writer. You should realise that spelling, language and layout mistakes are the first things notices, not a good structure or clear formulation of a problem.

**TIP** Only hand in your texts if you have looked at them carefully and have had them read by a critical reader. Read more about the technical presentation of texts on [www.taalwinkel.nl](http://www.taalwinkel.nl), Language tip 7218

### Questions or problems?

Do you wonder if your Dutch is of a sufficient level after reading this text. Ask your lecturer for their opinion. In the case of any problems, register at the Institute for Dutch Language Education for advice about courses that can possibly be taken to raise your Dutch to a sufficient level. For more information, visit [www.intt.uva.nl](http://www.intt.uva.nl).

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