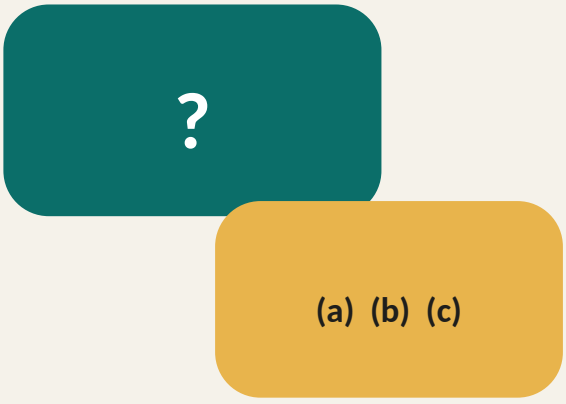
SAMPLE EDITION

Clear Academic English

A Practical Workbook for University Students

Margaret Ellwood

Reading · Writing · Self-check exercises with answers



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Clear Academic English

A Practical Workbook for University Students

Sample Edition

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Starter quiz

How much do you already know about academic study? Choose the best answer, (a), (b) or (c), for each question.

1 The main purpose of most academic writing is to
- (a) entertain the reader with personal stories
- (b) present an argument and support it with evidence
- (c) describe the writer's feelings about a topic

2 A *literature review* is
- (a) a list of novels studied on a course
- (b) a survey of published research on a topic
- (c) a review of a new book in a newspaper

3 Which sentence is most suitable for an essay?
- (a) Lots of people think pollution is really bad.
- (b) Pollution is widely regarded as a serious problem.
- (c) Pollution is, like, a massive deal these days.

4 *Paraphrasing* means
- (a) copying a passage and adding quotation marks
- (b) restating an idea in your own words without changing its meaning
- (c) reducing a long text to a list of key words

5 Which of these is an example of plagiarism?
- (a) using another writer's ideas without acknowledging them
- (b) quoting a source and including a reference
- (c) discussing your essay plan with a tutor

6 An *abstract* is normally found
- (a) at the end of the reference list
- (b) at the beginning of a research article
- (c) in the index of a textbook

7 When is it usually best to write the final version of an introduction?
- (a) before doing any reading
- (b) after drafting the main body
- (c) only if the essay is very long

8 A *primary source* is
- (a) original evidence such as data, documents or interviews
- (b) a textbook that summarises other studies
- (c) the first title on a reading list

Part 1

Reading and understanding

Unit 1 Reading academic texts

University courses ask students to read a wide range of material, often more than they can read in detail. Successful students learn to recognise what kind of text they are reading, notice the features of academic style, and read selectively for the information they need.

This unit will help you to:

- recognise common types of academic text
- identify the main features of academic style
- read a short text efficiently for key information

1 Types of academic text

Your reading list may include textbooks, journal articles, reports and other sources. Each type is written for a particular purpose and audience, so it is worth knowing what to expect before you begin.

Match each type of text (1–5) with the best description (a–e).

Type of text	Description
1 Journal article	(a) A long piece of original research written for a higher degree
2 Textbook	(b) A short paper presented to other researchers at a meeting
3 Report	(c) A peer-reviewed study published in a specialist periodical
4 Conference paper	(d) A general introduction to a subject, written for students
5 Thesis	(e) A document that investigates a situation and often makes recommendations

2 Features of academic style

Academic writing is usually impersonal and precise. Writers avoid slang and contractions, use cautious language when evidence is limited, and support their claims with references.

Decide whether each sentence is more suitable for academic writing (A) or informal writing (I).

1 The results suggest a link between sleep and memory.

(a) Academic
(b) Informal

2 Loads of students don’t bother with breakfast.

(a) Academic
(b) Informal

3 It can be argued that the policy was introduced too quickly.
(a) Academic
(b) Informal

4 This theory is totally wrong, in my opinion.
(a) Academic
(b) Informal

3 Reading for meaning

When you read for an assignment, you rarely need every detail. Instead, read with a clear question in mind. Look first at the title and the opening sentence of each paragraph, then read more carefully where the information you need is likely to be.

Read the text below and answer questions 1–5. Choose the best option, (a), (b), (c) or (d).

1.1 Bees in the city

Cities are not usually thought of as good places for wildlife. However, a growing number of studies indicate that urban areas can support surprisingly large populations of wild bees. Private gardens, parks and even roadside verges often contain a wider variety of flowering plants than nearby farmland, where a single crop may cover several square kilometres.

This variety matters because different species of bee feed on different flowers and are active at different times of year. A garden that flowers from early spring to late autumn can provide food when farmland offers almost none. In addition, many urban gardeners use fewer chemical sprays than commercial farms, although this varies considerably between neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, cities also create problems. Hard surfaces such as roads and car parks leave few places for ground-nesting bees, and isolated green spaces may be too far apart for small species to travel between. Researchers therefore recommend that planners connect parks with ‘green corridors’ and leave some areas of bare soil undisturbed.

1 According to the text, why can cities support many wild bees?
(a) They are warmer than the countryside.
(b) They contain a greater variety of flowering plants.
(c) They have fewer roads than farmland.
(d) Farmers have moved their hives into towns.

2 The word *this variety* (paragraph 2) refers to
(a) the range of plants in urban areas
(b) different species of bee
(c) the size of farms
(d) changes in the seasons

3 Which problem for bees in cities is mentioned?

(a) a lack of water
(b) too many flowers in spring
(c) few places for ground-nesting species
(d) heavy use of chemical sprays in every area

4 What do researchers recommend?

(a) planting a single crop in parks
(b) building more car parks
(c) linking green spaces and leaving some bare soil
(d) moving bees out of cities

5 The writer's attitude to urban bee populations is best described as

(a) completely negative
(b) balanced, noting benefits and problems
(c) uninterested
(d) entirely positive

▶ **See Unit 2.3 Summarising a short text**

Part 2

Using sources

Unit 2 Paraphrasing and summarising

In most assignments you will need to refer to the ideas of other writers. Quoting is useful for short, important phrases, but most of the time you are expected to express those ideas in your own words and acknowledge where they came from.

This unit will help you to:

- understand what a good paraphrase is
- choose formal vocabulary for academic writing
- write a short, accurate summary

1 What is paraphrasing?

A paraphrase restates the meaning of a source in different words and with a different structure. It should be about the same length as the original, keep all the main ideas, and include a reference. Useful techniques include:

- changing vocabulary, e.g. *rise* → *increase*
- changing word class, e.g. *economic growth* → *the economy grew*
- changing word order, e.g. moving the main idea to the start of the sentence

Read each original sentence and choose the best paraphrase, (a), (b) or (c).

1 *Original:* Many urban gardeners use fewer chemical sprays than commercial farms.

(a) Many urban gardeners use fewer chemical sprays than commercial farms do.
(b) People who garden in towns often apply less pesticide than large agricultural businesses.
(c) Commercial farms are bad because they use chemicals.

2 *Original:* Isolated green spaces may be too far apart for small species to travel between.

(a) Small species may be unable to move between green areas that are widely separated.
(b) Green spaces are always isolated in cities.
(c) Isolated green spaces may be too distant for little species to travel between.

3 Which of these is **not** a feature of a good paraphrase?

(a) It keeps the meaning of the original.
(b) It copies most of the original wording.
(c) It includes a reference to the source.

2 Choosing formal vocabulary

Many common verbs have a more formal equivalent that is preferred in academic writing.

Choose the more formal word or phrase to complete each sentence.

1 The survey was designed to _____ data on student spending.
(a) get
(b) obtain

2 Prices _____ sharply during the second quarter.
(a) rose
(b) went up

3 The researchers _____ several problems with the method.
(a) found out about
(b) identified

4 Further work is needed to _____ the cause of the decline.
(a) establish
(b) sort out

5 The number of applicants has _____ in recent years.
(a) increased
(b) got bigger

3 Summarising a short text

A summary is much shorter than the original and includes only the main points. Before you write, underline the key ideas, then express them briefly in your own words.

Read text 2.1 and choose the best summary, (a), (b) or (c).

2.1 Learning at a distance

Online courses allow students to study at times that suit them and to combine education with work or family responsibilities. However, many learners report that they feel isolated and find it difficult to stay motivated without regular contact with teachers and classmates. Courses that include live discussion sessions and quick feedback on assignments tend to have much lower drop-out rates than those that rely only on recorded material.

Which is the best summary of text 2.1?

(a) Online learning is flexible but can be isolating; regular interaction and feedback help students to continue.
(b) Online courses are always better than classroom courses because students can study at any time.
(c) Many students drop out of online courses because recorded material is too difficult to understand.

Answer key

Starter quiz

1 b 2 b 3 b 4 b 5 a 6 b 7 b 8 a

Question 7: the introduction can be drafted early, but it is easier to write the final version once you know exactly what the main body contains.

Unit 1 Reading academic texts

1 Types of academic text

1 c 2 d 3 e 4 b 5 a

2 Features of academic style

1 A 2 I 3 A 4 I

Sentence 2 uses informal vocabulary (*loads of*, *bother*) and a contraction. Sentence 4 is too personal and absolute; a more academic version would be *There are serious weaknesses in this theory*.

3 Reading for meaning

1 b 2 a 3 c 4 c 5 b

Question 3: option (d) is incorrect because the text says chemical use 'varies considerably between neighbourhoods'.

Unit 2 Paraphrasing and summarising

1 What is paraphrasing?

1 b 2 a 3 b

In question 1, option (a) repeats the original almost word for word, and option (c) adds an opinion that is not in the source. In question 2, option (c) changes only two words and is too close to the original.

2 Choosing formal vocabulary

1 obtain 2 rose 3 identified 4 establish 5 increased

3 Summarising a short text

(a)

Option (b) makes a claim that the text does not support. Option (c) misreports the reason for drop-out given in the text.

> **! Next steps**
>
> Count your correct answers. If you scored fewer than half in any section, reread the explanation for that section and try the exercise again after a few days.