

UNIT I

Introduction to the Writing Process

Important points and examination-oriented notes based on the prescribed course content

UNIT I: FIVE CORE AREAS

1. Basics and Conventions of Academic Writing 2. Reading and Developing Ideas 3. Understanding Paragraph Formats 4. Annotating 5. Note-making

1. Basics and Conventions of Academic Writing

Academic writing is formal, clear and organised writing used in educational and scholarly contexts. Its purpose is to communicate ideas logically and support them with appropriate evidence or explanation.

Important characteristics

- Clarity: Ideas should be expressed in language that is easy to understand.
- Formal style: Avoid slang, casual expressions and unnecessarily conversational language.
- Objectivity: Focus on ideas, evidence and reasoning rather than unsupported personal reactions.
- Accuracy: Facts, names, quotations, grammar and references should be correct.
- Precision: Use specific words instead of vague expressions.
- Coherence: Sentences and paragraphs should connect logically.
- Cohesion: Use pronouns, conjunctions, linking words and repetition of key terms to connect ideas.
- Evidence and support: Important claims should be explained, illustrated or supported by reliable sources where required.
- Originality: Ideas taken from sources must be acknowledged; copying without acknowledgement is plagiarism.

Common conventions

- Use complete sentences and appropriate paragraphing.
- Maintain consistent tense and point of view unless there is a reason to change them.
- Use headings and subheadings when they improve organisation.
- Use punctuation carefully, especially commas, full stops, quotation marks and apostrophes.
- Follow the required citation/reference style in research-based writing.
- Proofread for grammar, spelling, word choice and formatting before submission.

ACADEMIC WRITING: QUICK CHECK

Before submitting, ask: Is my purpose clear? Are my ideas logically organised? Have I supported important claims? Is the language formal and precise? Have I checked grammar, spelling and punctuation?

2. Reading and Developing Ideas

Good writing begins with good reading. Reading helps a writer identify important information, understand different viewpoints, generate ideas and develop arguments.

Active reading

- Read with a purpose rather than simply moving through the text.
- Identify the main idea and the writer's purpose.
- Notice supporting details, examples, evidence and explanations.
- Identify important terms, concepts and repeated ideas.
- Ask questions while reading: What? Why? How? What evidence? What are the implications?
- Distinguish between fact, opinion, interpretation and evidence.
- Connect the text with prior knowledge and other texts.

Ways to develop ideas

- Brainstorming: Quickly list all relevant ideas without judging them initially.
- Freewriting: Write continuously for a short period to discover possible ideas.
- Questioning: Develop ideas through who, what, when, where, why and how questions.
- Mind mapping: Place the central topic at the centre and connect related ideas around it.
- Listing: Make a structured list of points, examples or arguments.
- Clustering: Group related ideas together and identify relationships among them.
- Reading and research: Consult relevant sources to broaden knowledge and find evidence.

From reading to writing

- 1 Identify the topic and purpose.
- 2 Read relevant material actively.
- 3 Mark or record important information.
- 4 Group related ideas.
- 5 Select the most relevant points.
- 6 Arrange the points in a logical order.
- 7 Develop the points into sentences and paragraphs.
- 8 Revise and proofread the final draft.

KEY DISTINCTION

Main idea = the central point of a text or paragraph. Supporting details = facts, examples, explanations or reasons that develop the main idea.

3. Understanding Paragraph Formats

A paragraph is a group of related sentences that develops one central idea. A well-structured paragraph usually contains a topic sentence, supporting sentences and, where appropriate, a concluding sentence.

Basic structure of a paragraph

Part	Function
Topic sentence	Introduces the main idea or controlling point of the paragraph.
Supporting sentences	Explain, illustrate, justify or develop the main idea through details, examples, reasons or evidence.
Concluding sentence	Brings the paragraph to a logical close or reinforces the main point.

Common paragraph formats / patterns

- Narrative: Presents events or experiences in a sequence.
- Descriptive: Creates a clear picture of a person, place, object, scene or experience.
- Expository: Explains or informs the reader about a subject.
- Cause-and-effect: Explains why something happens and/or what results from it.
- Compare-and-contrast: Shows similarities and differences between two or more subjects.
- Process: Explains how something is done or how something happens, usually in steps.
- Argumentative: Presents a claim and supports it with reasons and evidence.

Qualities of an effective paragraph

- Unity: Every sentence contributes to one central idea.
- Coherence: Ideas follow a logical order.
- Cohesion: Sentences are connected through suitable linking devices.
- Adequate development: The central idea is sufficiently explained or supported.

4. Annotating

Annotation means making brief notes, marks or comments on a text while reading. It is an active reading technique that helps the reader understand, remember and analyse information.

What to annotate

- Main ideas and important arguments.
- Key terms, definitions and concepts.
- Important examples, facts and evidence.
- Difficult or unfamiliar words.
- Questions that arise while reading.
- Connections with other ideas, texts or previous knowledge.
- Points that you agree or disagree with, with reasons.
- Passages that may be useful for later writing or examination answers.

Useful annotation symbols

Symbol	Possible meaning
★	Very important point
!	Surprising or significant idea
?	Question / unclear point
Def.	Definition
Ex.	Example
→	Cause, result or connection
✓	Important / understood

Steps for effective annotation

- 1 Preview the text and identify its topic.
- 2 Read the text carefully.
- 3 Mark the central ideas and important details.
- 4 Underline or highlight selectively rather than marking everything.
- 5 Write short comments or questions in the margin.
- 6 Identify unfamiliar vocabulary and look up meanings when necessary.
- 7 Review the annotations after reading.

AVOID OVER-ANNOTATION

Highlighting almost every sentence is not useful. Annotation should help you locate the most important information quickly.

5. Note-making

Note-making is the process of reducing a longer text into brief, organised points containing the essential information. Good notes are concise, clear and arranged in a logical structure.

Features of good notes

- Concise: Include essential information, not every sentence from the source.
- Organised: Use headings, subheadings and logical order.
- Clear: The meaning should remain understandable when the notes are reviewed later.
- Accurate: Do not distort the original meaning.
- Selective: Choose the most relevant points.
- Use abbreviations: Use familiar and consistent abbreviations where appropriate.
- Use keywords: Keywords often communicate more efficiently than complete sentences.

Common formats of note-making

- Outline format: Main headings followed by subheadings and supporting points.
- Numbered format: Information is arranged through numbers and sub-numbers.
- Bullet-point format: Useful for quick revision and short information.
- Mind map / diagram: Shows relationships among ideas visually.
- Table / chart: Useful for comparing categories or organising factual information.

Useful abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
e.g.	for example
i.e.	that is
w/	with
w/o	without
b/w	between
esp.	especially
govt.	government
edu.	education

Note-making: recommended procedure

- 1 Read the passage once for general understanding.
- 2 Read it again and identify the main topic and major points.
- 3 Divide the information into suitable headings and subheadings.
- 4 Write short points using keywords and phrases.
- 5 Use abbreviations where they improve brevity and remain clear.
- 6 Check that the notes contain the essential information.
- 7 Add a suitable title if required.

UNIT I: LAST-MINUTE REVISION SHEET

Term	Remember this
Academic writing	Formal, clear, precise, objective, coherent and evidence-based writing.
Clarity	Ideas are easy to understand.
Coherence	Ideas are arranged logically.
Cohesion	Language devices connect sentences and ideas.
Unity	A paragraph develops one central idea.
Topic sentence	States the main idea of a paragraph.
Supporting sentences	Explain, develop or support the topic sentence.
Annotation	Brief marks/comments made while actively reading.
Note-making	Condensing a longer text into organised essential points.
Brainstorming	Generating many possible ideas before selecting the useful ones.
Paraphrasing	Restating an idea in your own words without changing its meaning.

Possible examination questions

- What is academic writing? Mention its major characteristics.
- Explain the importance of clarity, coherence and cohesion in academic writing.
- What is brainstorming? How does it help in developing ideas?
- What are the major components of a well-structured paragraph?
- Explain unity, coherence and cohesion in paragraph writing.
- What is annotation? Discuss its importance in active reading.
- What are the features of good note-making?
- Differentiate between annotation and note-making.
- Explain any four methods of developing ideas before writing.
- Describe the steps involved in the writing process.

EXAM TIP

For a 5-mark answer, begin with a short definition, explain 3–5 key points in separate bullets or paragraphs, and finish with a brief concluding statement or example. For a longer answer, add suitable examples and explain each point.

Prepared as a student-friendly study handout from the Unit I syllabus shown in the provided course document.