

Academic Phrase Checker

A Tool for Improving Your Academic Writing

This checklist helps you identify common weak phrases in academic writing and provides stronger alternatives. Use it during the editing process to strengthen your papers, essays, and dissertations.

Vague or Informal Phrases to Avoid

Opening Phrases

 Weak Phrase	 Academic Alternative
"Since the beginning of time..."	"Historical evidence suggests that..."
"Throughout human history..."	"Since the mid-20th century..." / "Throughout the medieval period..."
"In today's society..."	"In contemporary Britain..." / "In 21st-century urban contexts..."
"Nowadays..."	"Current research indicates..." / "Recent developments in this field..."
"This essay will talk about..."	"This paper examines..." / "This study investigates..."

Opinion Phrases

 Weak Phrase	 Academic Alternative
"I think/believe/feel that..."	"The evidence suggests that..." / "It can be argued that..."
"In my opinion..."	"Based on the analysis of X..." / "The data indicates that..."
"It is obvious that..."	"Research demonstrates that..." / "Multiple studies have shown that..."
"Everyone knows that..."	"It is widely accepted in the field that..." (with citation)
"It goes without saying..."	"As demonstrated by Smith (2020)..."

Overstated Claims

 Weak Phrase	 Academic Alternative
"This proves that..."	"This suggests that..." / "This provides evidence that..."
"It is absolutely certain..."	"The findings strongly indicate..." / "There is substantial evidence for..."
"It is 100% clear that..."	"The data consistently shows..." / "The majority of studies support..."
"This completely refutes..."	"This challenges the view that..." / "This raises questions about..."
"X always/never causes Y..."	"X frequently correlates with Y..." / "X is a significant factor in..."

Informal Transitions

 Weak Phrase	 Academic Alternative
"Also..." (at start of sentence)	"Additionally..." / "Furthermore..." / "Moreover..."
"So..." (at start of sentence)	"Therefore..." / "Consequently..." / "As a result..."
"But..." (at start of sentence)	"However..." / "Nevertheless..." / "Conversely..."
"A lot of..." / "Lots of..."	"Numerous..." / "A significant number of..." / "Many..."
"And so on..." / "etc."	List specific examples or use "among others"

Self-Editing Checklist

- Search your document for all first-person pronouns (I, my, we, our) and replace where appropriate
- Check for absolute terms (always, never, all, none, every) and replace with qualified language
- Identify unsupported claims and add evidence with proper citations
- Replace vague temporal references with specific time periods
- Strengthen transition words and phrases between paragraphs
- Ensure claims are proportional to the evidence provided
- Replace informal language with academic alternatives

Discipline-Specific Considerations

- **Sciences:** Focus on precision, objectivity, and measured claims
- **Social Sciences:** Balance theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence
- **Humanities:** Develop nuanced arguments that acknowledge complexity
- **Law:** Emphasize precedent and authority in argumentation
- **Medicine:** Prioritize evidence-based language and clinical relevance

Using the Academic Phrasebank

The University of Manchester Academic Phrasebank (www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk) provides ready-made phrases for:

- Introducing work
- Referring to literature
- Being critical

- Describing methods
- Reporting results
- Drawing conclusions

Visit the website for a comprehensive collection of academic phrases organized by function.

Example Transformation

Before:

I think climate change is a really big problem. Throughout history, the Earth has had many climate shifts, but this one is happening super fast. Lots of scientists agree that humans are causing it. It's obvious that we need to act quickly to fix this issue.

After:

Analysis of current data suggests that climate change represents a significant global challenge. While paleoclimatic records indicate numerous historical temperature fluctuations, contemporary warming is occurring at an unprecedented rate (Smith, 2022). The scientific consensus, supported by multiple meta-analyses, indicates that anthropogenic factors are the primary drivers of observed climate anomalies (IPCC, 2021). The evidence strongly suggests that immediate mitigation strategies are necessary to address this complex environmental phenomenon.