

## Academic Writing for Reports

Read the following extracts from reports.

In each case identify the main problem with the writing style, then rewrite the problematic sentences so they are more suitable for an academic report.

Possible answers can be found at the end of this document.

---

### Example 1:

After adding the solution, the mixture in the test tube went a bright scarlet red, which we did not expect, as this was not the same as the washed out pink colour it was supposed to go according to the book. We shook the test tube up and left it for a while in the test tube stand. When we came back, the mixture had settled to the bottom and dried out, which it was not supposed to have happened; this was a bit of a problem.

---

### Example 2:

The results of the aforementioned experiment were collated in a systemized manner with all due care and attention. Once the results had been collected and processed with the appropriate process, it was necessary to perform the analysis upon them which was conducted using the computer statistical package previously mentioned in the methodology.

---

### Example 3:

The questionnaire will be carried out in the pubic space next to the town hall, were local residents can be found and stopped. If we can't find enough local people to answer our survey, we'll do down the street and see if we can find some more in the shopping centre as there tends to be local youths hanging around their who we could ask.

---

### Example 4:

This is a feasibility study of the proposed extension to the property "22 Trumpington Terrace" commissioned by the residents Mr and Mrs Phelps. The house is a semi-detached, two bedroom property with glazed windows and a red door. It is situated on a quiet, winding street with nearby houses of a similar design

and the residents have started a local Neighbourhood Watch group. The Phelps inherited the house from Mr Phelps' uncle and have been in residence there since 31st August 1998.

## Academic Writing for Reports Answers

These are suggested rewritings of the paragraphs, but yours may be slightly different.

---

### Example 1:

This writing is too subjective ("bright scarlet red") and inaccurate ("left it for a while"). It also mixes results and interpretations of results in with the method, instead of simply describing the procedure. The overall style is too personal ("this was a bit of a problem"), as opposed to the objective style expected in a scientific report.

A better version:

After adding the solution, the test tube was inverted and shaken three times. It was then left in the test tube stand for 10 minutes for the reaction to occur. The colour of the mixture was then compared to the scale in the book.

---

### Example 2:

This style is overly complex and wordy ("aforementioned" and "systemized"). It manages to say very little and could be condensed to a single sentence - saving 38 empty words.

A better example:

The results were collated, processed, and then analysed using the appropriate statistical programme.

---

### Example 3:

This extract has not been proofread carefully as shown by the use of "pubic" instead of "public", "were" instead of "where", and "their" instead of "there". The style is too informal, as there are colloquial expressions from everyday speech ("go down the street") and also contractions of words ("can't" instead of "cannot"). Also the method is not very scientific and it would be better to explain why more residents and another location needs to be found. The writing style is also personal ("If we can't find..."), so it may be more appropriate to rephrase it in the third person.

A better version:

The questionnaire will be carried out in the public space next to the Town Hall, where local residents can be found and stopped. If there are not enough residents to complete the required sample, an alternative location will be found where there are more passing residents, for example in the shopping centre.

---

#### Example 4:

This extract includes a lot of unnecessary detail. The audience of the report is the property owners, so they will already know that they inherited the house from an uncle and that they have been living there since August 1998. Also is it really necessary to include information about the door colour and Neighbourhood Watch scheme in a report on a house extension?

A better version:

This is a feasibility study of the proposed extension to the property "22 Trumpington Terrace" commissioned by the residents Mr and Mrs Phelps. The house is semi-detached with two bedrooms and double-glazed windows. It is situated on a quiet street alongside similar properties.