

ACADEMIC STYLE

The academic style of writing required here at UCC, depending on your discipline or department, may vary to what you have been used to. **Most departments in UCC have guidelines available for students, and you should ask a tutor or lecturer where you can access them.**

TOP TIP

The most important point here is that you write clearly, so that the reader can easily understand your ideas. Don't put pressure on yourself to write in a very complex and academic style from the start. Being clear and having control of your writing is key.

Signposting

Signposting is how you guide the reader through your writing. This can also vary, so make sure you learn about signposting and the type of signposting used in your discipline. Signposts are words or phrases that express a connection between two ideas and make the transition from one point to the next. They can link the following:

- **Ideas within a sentence**
- **Two sentences**
- **Two paragraphs**
- **Two parts of the essay together**

TOP TIP

Signposting can help to make your writing flow smoothly, without any abrupt, disjointed breaks that leave the reader wondering what your points have to do with one another or what their relevance is. They can show the link between ideas.

Signpost words specify how the two ideas are related. For example, whether they are similar ideas, contrasting ideas, or whether one idea adds more detail. They can show that one idea is the result or conclusion of another, or to show the order of the ideas in a sequence. **They are a key component in developing your argument, showing the structure of your argument. They help your reader to follow where your essay is going.**

Where to Signpost

The signpost words and phrases can be used to link ideas:

- Within a sentence
- Across sentences
- Paragraphs
- Sections of your essay

They can be used

- At the start of sentences/ paragraph
- In the middle of a sentence/ paragraph
- At the end of a sentence/ paragraph

They can be very effective in the first sentence of your paragraph to indicate what the function of that paragraph is in the context of your argument, or in the middle of a paragraph to develop your point. They should be used with careful thought about their function.

The Importance of Signposting

TOP TIP

The lack of signposting can indicate that your argument is becoming descriptive rather than analytical. You may need to develop a list of points and ensure they are connected.

Variation in the kinds of signposts you use can indicate that you are critically analysing the issue and exploring the argument thoroughly. A list of typical signposting language is below in the online resources.

They can be used to signal the structure of your essay or the logical connections in your argument.

Reflection & Review

You should never submit a first draft of an assignment. It is vital that you reflect on and review your writing. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the language **too simple**?
- Is the language **too complex**?
- Are you **guiding the reader**?
- Is there a **logical flow**?

- Do **the ideas link**?
- Is there **a clear focus**?
- Does **the evidence support the claims**?
- Is **the analysis apparent**?

Often it is difficult to see our own mistakes. So, it is also a good idea **to ask someone to read your assignment** to see if it makes sense.

TOP TIP

An academic style does not mean using long complex words. The purpose is to communicate complex ideas in a way that makes them least likely to be challenged. To achieve this, the writing must be:

- Formal or easily understood
- Structured to avoid more confusion
- Precise to avoid ideas being challenged

Useful Links

- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- <https://www.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/7632456/Using+sign-post+words+and+phrases.pdf/4347566d-8b81-49ed-b715-e98d28467fed>
- <https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/writing/style>
- <https://www.ucd.ie/writingcentre/t4media/Academic%20Phrasing%20handout.pdf>
- <https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/academic-style-guide.original.pdf>
- <https://www.ref-n-write.com/trial/research-paper-sample-writing-introduction-section-academic-phrasebank-vocabulary/>

Other Relevant PDFs

- Sentence Structure
- Grammar
- Editing
- Proofreading
- Paragraph Structure