

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Effective writing skills are essential not only for attaining professional credentials but also for advancing in one's career. Although sometimes treated synonymously, academic and scholarly writing do have some variations in their purposes and characteristics. Understanding the distinctions between academic and scholarly writing and employing them appropriately may be the difference between a stellar professional career and one of continual angst resulting from the publish-or-perish paradigm.

The purpose of this guide is twofold:

- to aid graduate students in understanding the distinctions between academic and scholarly writing and
- to provide professionals with a resource for maintaining and improving their skills in crafting scholarly discourse.

To accomplish these objectives, information concerning both academic and scholarly writing is presented. Specific problems graduate students and professionals may encounter in crafting publishable works are also identified and explained. The tips and techniques presented have been gleaned from numerous sources and represent the most common problems and pitfalls in producing well-written papers, articles, monographs, and books.

## **Chapter 2: The Two Types of Writing**

Academic and scholarly writing bear striking resemblances to each other. However, subtle differences exist between the two. Where academic writing may be defined broadly as any writing completed to fulfill university or college requirements, scholarly writing is produced to inform a specialized audience of other scholars in a particular field. Scholarly writing is crafted by one professional for other professionals (“Definition of Academic Writing,” 2011). Graduate students may wish to think of scholarly writing as a subset of academic writing.

The purpose of academic writing is to present information about a specific subject precisely and objectively (Nordquist, 2011). Academic writing in college and graduate school is usually geared toward students demonstrating their mastery of content and the analytical and writing processes requisite for entry into their professions. Generally, authors generate either expository or argumentative prose to complete the requirements.

The purpose of scholarly writing is the advancement of knowledge within a specific field. More than a demonstration of the author’s expertise, scholarly writing is produced to add to the body of knowledge, extending, challenging, or expanding what is known or believed within the field. Thus, while all scholarly writing is academic writing, not all academic writing is scholarly writing.

### **The Forms of Academic and Scholarly Writing**

The forms of writing authors may produce are varied. In general, academic writing is found in essays, course papers, research papers, book reports, translations, theses, dissertations, books, articles, technical reports, critiques, and abstracts. Scholarly writing is limited to scholarly books, treatises, technical reports, legal documents, journal articles, and monographs. However, according to Stanton (2008), the accepted forms for scholarly writing are expanding. Although monograph and journal articles are the preferred forms of scholarly writing—for some, the only appropriate forms—other forms, such as collections of articles or essays, translations of primary texts, trade books, articles for more general audiences, essays, critical reviews, trade publications, and even textbooks, have begun to be recognized as legitimate vehicles for authors to demonstrate their content knowledge and to contribute to the body of knowledge within their specific fields.

Although the forms of scholarly and academic writing are converging, in part due to the advances in digital publishing, the purpose and intended audience of scholastic writing continue to demark the subtle differences between the two types (Stanton, 2008). Graduate students, doctoral candidates, and individuals in the beginning stages of their professional careers may benefit from choosing to present their views in more traditional formats. As in most arenas, one must follow the rules until one achieves a certain level of acceptance and authority. At that point, if one breaks the rules, others consider it creativity and genius rather than immaturity, naïveté, or ignorance.

## **Language: Levels of Formality**

Graduate students and professionals must be aware of the level of formality required in the works they produce. Authors employ one of three basic levels of language: formal, semiformal, or informal (Driscoll & Brizee, 2011). The level for any work should be based on the target audience and the purpose of the work.

Informal language is rarely used in academic or scholarly writing. This level is more conversational in style, often does not follow conventional rules of grammar and mechanics, and may include the use of slang and colloquialisms. Personal letters, conversations, social networking entries, and dialogue in popular forms of literature are usually written in informal English.

In academic writing, authors may use either semiformal or formal language. The choice should be based on audience and purpose. Authors use semiformal language in business letters to individuals well known to them, in professional writing intended for a general audience such as trade publications, and in personal essays. Conventional rules of grammar and mechanics apply; however, the tone is more personal. Authors refer to themselves in the first person (i.e., *I*, *we*) and to their readers in second person (i.e., *you*). Judicious use of contractions, shorter sentences, and more reader-friendly vocabulary mark this level.

Formal language is generally used in academic and scholarly writing. Conventional rules of grammar and mechanics apply; however, the tone is more serious. Authors use third person in referring to themselves and to their readers. Contractions are not used. Sentences may be more complex in structure. Vocabulary is more formal and precise. Abbreviations and acronyms are used judiciously. Because the audience is often other people in the same profession, authors may use more technical terms. People within the profession know and understand these terms and expect them to be used. However, if the audience is more general, including people not familiar with the vocabulary of the profession, the use of technical terms should be kept to a minimum. Authors should also consider defining the technical terms that are used.