

## Academic Style vs. Non-Academic Style

Generally, assignments should be written in an academic register or lexicon. This means using a “voice” that is more professional and objective than the way we tend to speak in everyday life. Compare the style and tone of the following examples, which both discuss anxiety in teenagers.

**Example 1** is a non-academic source that uses a style resembling everyday speech (not recommended), and **Example 2** is an academic source that uses a scholastic style (recommended).

### Example 1: Non-Academic Source

**It's harder to be a teen now than it was in 1965**—at least according to teenagers. That's not in spite of the Internet and the iPhone. **It's because** of all the technology that surrounds **us**. “We have more responsibilities because of all the technology that we have,” **says Sharon Bayantemur, a 17-year-old student at East Side Community High School in New York City**. “People expect more from you because they know you have a cell phone and they can contact you and you have to pick up. Back then you didn't really have that obligation.” **There's also** the anxiety of having the most experimental years of their lives documented online for all to see. **They know** that mistakes can live **forever** on the Internet. That mentality helps explain why they're leading the adoption of a new wave of anonymous and private communications platforms, such as *Snapchat*, *YikYak* and *GroupMe*. None of them makes phone calls anymore, unless it's an urgent matter. “I don't even know how to check my voicemail,” says Lukas Castellanos, an 18-year-old at Briarwood **who performs theater**.

- Luckerson, Victor. “The American Teenager in 2015: On the Fringe of Something New”, *TIME Magazine*, 2015, <https://time.com/the-american-teenager-in-2015-on-the-fringe-of-something-new/>

- X Uses **contractions** and abbreviations like “it's” and “teen” (non-academic), rather than “it is” and “teenager” (academic).
- X Unnecessary use of a hyphen ( - ), i.e. other **punctuation** would have been more appropriate, e.g. a comma ( , ).
- X Makes **broad, sweeping claims** (about personal and comparative experiences like being a teenager) without empirical, peer-reviewed evidence to support it.
- X Uses **unclear pronouns** like “it” at the beginning of a sentence, rather than the use of a specific noun/ subject.
- X Uses uncited sources that are **not peer-reviewed** by academics (one teenager's **personal opinion**). This is also problematic because it is *only one* opinion, i.e. it is not a valid **sample size** (as in the case of surveys, which evaluate many opinions either within an elected demographic, or from a variety of demographics).
- X Closes a quotation and then immediately proceeds to a new topic (“There's also...”). There is no reflection on/ **analysis** of the quotation provided.
- X Uses **speculative claims** that are unsupported (“They know”). In legal terms, this would be considered “hearsay” and, thus, invalid evidence.
- X Uses **hyperbole**, e.g. “mistakes can live forever”. This is a slight exaggeration and so the tone becomes somewhat sensational.
- X Includes **unnecessary information** that does not support the main point (“who performs theatre”). The reader did not need to know this because it is irrelevant to the issue being discussed.

## Example 2: Academic Source

The current meta-analysis provides a timely estimate of clinically elevated depression and generalized anxiety symptoms globally among youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Across 29 samples and 80,879 youth**, the pooled prevalence of clinically elevated depression and anxiety symptoms was **25.2% and 20.5%**, respectively. Thus, **1 in 4 youth globally** are experiencing clinically elevated depression symptoms, while **1 in 5 youth** are experiencing clinically elevated anxiety symptoms. **A comparison of these findings** to pre-pandemic estimates (12.9% for depression<sup>2</sup> and 11.6% for anxiety<sup>1</sup>) **suggests** that youth mental health difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic has **likely** doubled. The COVID-19 pandemic, and its associated restrictions and consequences, **appear to** have taken a considerable toll on youth and their psychological well-being. Loss of peer interactions, social isolation, and reduced contact with buffering supports (eg, teachers, coaches) may have precipitated these increases.<sup>3</sup> [...] As the month of data collection increased, rates of depression and anxiety increased correspondingly. One possibility is that **ongoing social isolation**,<sup>6</sup> **family financial difficulties**,<sup>55</sup> **missed milestones, and school disruptions**<sup>3</sup> are compounding over time for youth and having a cumulative association. **However, longitudinal research supporting this possibility is currently scarce and urgently needed.**

- Racine, Nicole et al. "Global Prevalence of Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms in Children and Adolescents During COVID-19", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 175, no. 11, 2021, pp. 1142-1150.

- ✓ Defines what **kind of research** is being conducted here, i.e. a meta-analysis.
- ✓ Provides **convincing evidence** in the form of a large sample size (29 samples and 80,879 subjects).
- ✓ Gives **specific facts and figures** (the use of percentages like 25.2% and ratios like 1 in 4), rather than broad generalisations, estimates, and speculations.
- ✓ Uses **comparative language** ("A comparison of these findings...") to contextualise the information provided.
- ✓ Proposes **hypotheses** based on the evidence, rather than brash claims ("suggests", "likely", "appear to", etc).
- ✓ **Cites** all information provided and claims presented with secondary sources. These sources are represented in the text with in-text citations, i.e. footnote/ endnote indicators ("ongoing social isolation<sup>6</sup>").
- ✓ Gives a specific (and supported) **rationale/ explanation** for the trend being identified by suggesting potential causes ("ongoing social isolation, family financial difficulties, missed milestones, and school disruptions").
- ✓ Addresses the **limitations** of the claims being made and makes future research recommendations to redress the gaps in knowledge ("longitudinal research ... is currently scarce and urgently needed").

### Summary:

#### DO NOT:

- ✗ Use contractions.
- ✗ Make unsupported claims.
- ✗ Use unclear pronouns.
- ✗ Use personal opinions or sources that are not peer-reviewed.
- ✗ Neglect analysis.
- ✗ Make speculations.
- ✗ Use hyperbole.
- ✗ Provide unnecessary information.

#### DO:

- ✓ Define the research.
- ✓ Provide evidence.
- ✓ Be specific.
- ✓ Contextualise.
- ✓ Hypothesise.
- ✓ Cite.
- ✓ Explain/ analyse.
- ✓ Note limitations.
- ✓ Use correct grammar + syntax.