

Achieving Impact in Your Writing

1. Where possible and appropriate, use Positive Forms, rather than Negative Forms.

Negative Form

This is when the sentence states that something is not the case. We indicate negative forms by using the adverb “not” after the verb.

He is not very often on time.

The literature does not reflect a clear methodology.

- The sentences become unnecessarily complicated, or “backwards”.
- These are statements of negation (or absence), and they can undermine authority in the register.
- If it is used too frequently, readers can find this kind of writing difficult to follow.

Positive Form

This is when the sentence actively states that the subject (the noun) of the sentence has performed an action (the verb).

He usually arrives late.

The methodology is unclear in the literature.

- The sentences are more direct and more succinct.
- The statements are more assertive and active because they are presented as statements of fact, i.e. they are stating what *did* happen, rather than what *did not* happen.
- Such sentences are easier for readers to follow.

2. Know which Tense you should be using and when to use it (Past, Present, or Future).

Present tense: We use the present tense for known facts and hypotheses.

- *The average life of a honey bee is 6 weeks.*
- *Smith et al. argue that blood pressure is best controlled by XYZ.*

Past tense: We use the past tense when referring to past events, or to descriptions about experiments that have been conducted, as well as their results.

- *The average life span of bees in our contained environment was 8 weeks.*
- *While Smith et al. argued XYZ, these theories have since been disproven.*

Future tense: We rarely use the future tense in academic writing, and it is usually used to describe follow-up research that needs to be conducted, or the potential impacts/ consequences of our research and arguments.

- *The influence of thermodynamics will be the object of much more future research when...*
- *This theory will have a significant impact in the field of anthropology because...*

Avoid shifting tenses within a paragraph, sub-section, or section of text

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3. Use active and dynamic verbs, which make the writing “move”.

Students often fall into the trap of repeating the same verbs over and over again. Vary your verb usage as much as possible by being specific in relation to the task.

NOTE (Foster, 2008): Only use the verbs with which you are familiar, or, take the time to examine the verb definition in the dictionary. This is *not* a list of synonyms. Each word has specific usage patterns that are unique to its meaning.

When you want to show something	When you are referring to scholarly arguments	When you want to describe beginnings, causes, effects, etc.	When you are referring to possibilities
Alludes to; Attests; Clarifies; Confirms; Conveys; Denotes; Depicts; Determines; Displays; Emphasizes; Entails; Establishes; Exemplifies; Explains; Exposes; Expounds; Highlights; Illustrates; Implies; Connotes; Indicates; Portrays; Represents; Reveals; Shows; Signifies; Substantiates; Suggests; Typifies; Underscores.	Analyzes; Assumes; Concludes; Confirms; Considers; Construes; Deduces; Deliberates; Demonstrates; Examines; Explores; Identifies; Imparts; Indicates; Maintains; Manifests; Misconstrues; Observes; Perceives; Pinpoints; Presumes; Questions; Reasons; Refers; Remarks; Scrutinizes; Speculates; Substantiates; Supports; Supposes; Theorizes; Upholds; Validates; Verifies.	Advances; Affects; Compels; Discovers; Empowers; Forces; Generates; Ignites; Impacts; Imposes; Incites; Includes; Influences; Initiates; Commences; Instigates; Introduces; Involves; Kindles; Launches; Leads to; Presents; Pressures; Promotes; Prompts; Provokes; Results in; Sparks; Stimulates; Triggers; Yields.	Accomplishes; Achieves; Aids; Alleviates; Ameliorates; Assembles; Assists; Attains; Attempts; Augments; Builds; Constructs; Delivers; Develops; Discourages; Emits; Encourages; Engenders; Enhances; Enriches; Establishes; Expands; Facilitates; Grants; Improves; Increases; Manufactures; Offers; Produces; Progresses; Provides; Reaches; Supplies; Transforms.

Adapted from Mary Beth Foster, SALT Center, University of Arizona, 2008.