

CHAPTER 13: Writing up the research - ACTIVITIES



Writing skills improve by practice and attempting different styles of expression.

It is best if you can wait a few weeks before comparing the writing exercises you do in this section.

1. Take a piece of text that you have written recently (about 500 words). Identify the key words you have used most frequently. Using a hard copy thesaurus or the facility on your word processing software, substitute synonyms as appropriate. Compare the two pieces of text and reflect on which is better and why.
2. Select a short section of text from a book (no more than one or two pages) and read it. Without referring to it again, write a letter to a friend explaining what the section is about. Put the original text and the letter aside for about two weeks and then try to reconstruct the text. Compare the two pieces and identify where there are significant differences in context and style.
3. Use a well-known proverb, phrase or verse and write a short narrative using the passive voice and the personal voice to reflect the two main paradigms. In addition, write it again in a colloquial style as if you were talking informally to a friend. This exercise will improve the flexibility of your style.

EXAMPLE

Proverb

The mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck one; the mouse ran down.

Passive voice

It was observed that the mouse ascended the case of the grandfather clock in a rapid manner. When the chiming mechanism of the clock struck one o'clock, the rodent descended speedily. As this behaviour was only observed on one occasion, it is not possible to generalize from it. However, it is hypothesized that the rapid descent was associated with fright. This requires further investigation with a large sample of rodents in a controlled environment.

4. Conduct a literature search for articles that discuss the ranking of journals in your discipline. Compare the rankings across the articles and identify potential journals for articles you will write from your research.
5. Select four target journals as above and analyse the articles published over the past five years by methodology, topic, sample size, country and the affiliation of the author (university, college or other institution). Identify any pattern and determine how any article you might write fits into this pattern.