

Business versus Academic Writing

APSU Writing Center Handout

Business Writing

Purpose

To inform, persuade, or instruct

To propose a solution, recommendation, or course of action

Goal

Solving problems

Support decision-making

Move the audience toward action

Audience

clients, customers, employers, colleagues, and stakeholders

Tone

professional, direct, concise, positive, and solution-focused

Style

Clear headings and bullet points

Short paragraphs

Active voice

Plain, accessible language

Key Characteristics

Focuses on audience needs

Emphasize clarity and efficiency

Calls the audience to action

Often includes recommendations or next steps

Functions as a practical plan for implementation

Examples

emails, memos, meeting minutes, policy recommendations, applications, ads, and press releases

Academic Writing

Purpose

To present research, analysis, or scholarly argument

To explore and evaluate ideas

Goal

Contribute to academic discussion

Demonstrate critical thinking

Support claims with evidence

Audience

professors, researchers, scholars, and academic peers

Tone

formal, objective, and analytical

Style

Thesis-driven

Well-developed paragraphs

Formal vocabulary

Structured argumentation

Key Characteristics

Uses evidence from credible sources

Includes citations and references (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

Builds logical arguments

Engages with existing research

Focuses on analysis rather than action

Examples

research papers, literature reviews, analytical essays, lab reports, and scholarly articles