

Characteristics of Academic Writing

1. Makes a debatable claim that requires evidence.
2. Reminds reader of that claim periodically, especially when complicating it; does not assume that the reader knows what's going on in the author's mind.
3. Explains why the claim is important, especially if the importance can be seen as obscure.
4. Explicitly identifies prior conversation or debate that the writer is entering.
5. Summarizes others' ideas before responding to them.
6. Attempts to persuade audience of truth or significance of the claim.
7. Anticipates, summarizes, and refutes possible objections.
8. Writes meta-text into paper, putting it into perspective: "In other words," "What I've been trying to say is that," "I don't mean to suggest that..."
9. Unpacks assumptions and/or addresses further implications of the argument.
10. Looks for deep meanings of things, not just surface meanings.
11. Addresses unrecognized problem, invents problem most people are unaware of, or describes recognized problem in new ways.

(Borrowed and adapted from Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe*, esp. Chapter 2 and Epilogue)