Academic Style: the essentials

Check your work for TOPIC – **T**he full word, **O**bjective, **P**recise, **I**mpersonal and **C**autious.

- **T: The full words**, not contractions
  o Contractions are short forms of two words, like 'don't' (do not), 'can't' (cannot), 'I'll' (I will), and so on
  o Write the full word

- **O: Objective** – avoid emotional language
  o Don't use adjectives like 'terrible', 'sad', 'impressive', which are all feelings. Simply remove these from your work. (Unless the emotion is the subject of your assignment!)
  o Avoid any words which are intended to make your reader feel a particular emotion, or which express your emotion.

- **P: Precise** – avoid vague terms
  o Words like 'thing', 'stuff' and phrases like 'lots of' are vague
  o Instead, use more accurate terms, for example instead of 'things we do', say 'particular behaviours or actions' (which terms depends on the subject – draw on your sources to identify useful terms)
  o Instead of 'lots of', use phrases like 'a significant amount/ number/ proportion' or even better, give a particular quantity e.g. more than half

- **I: Impersonal** – avoid 'I', 'you' and 'we'
  o Instead of 'you' or 'we', use specific terms for the groups people you are writing to or about, such as 'teachers', 'managers', 'employees', 'health workers', etc.
  o Instead of 'I', re-work your sentences so that instead of saying 'I believe that this means X', say 'This could mean X'.

- **C: Cautious** – avoid generalisations like 'this is true for everyone'; say instead 'this is often the case for many people'
  o Instead, be precise (see below) and use cautious or hedging language like 'some', 'many', 'in some cases'
  o Add verbs like 'might', 'may' and 'could'
  o Use 'potentially' or 'perhaps'
  o Use verbs like 'tend to', 'indicate' and 'suggest' instead of 'is' or 'will'
  o Don't use all of these at once – it depends on whether what you are saying is fact, interpretation or argument.

Refer the Full Guide to Academic Style for complete explanations and more examples.