***Academic Writing: An Introduction 3/e***

**Questions for Students**

**Prepared for Broadview Press by Dr. Laurie McNeill, Coordinated Arts Program, University of British Columbia**

The questions below are designed to help students as they review their reading of *Academic Writing: An Introduction*, 3/e.

To the student: Whether you answer the questions on your own (as a way of helping you to focus on some of the more important points in each chapter), or as part of an assignment for your instructor, we hope they prompt a fuller engagement with what you have read.

The publishers welcome comments and suggestions—regarding *Academic Writing: An Introduction* itself, as well as any aspect of this site. Feel free to contact us: [customerservice@broadviewpress.com](mailto:customerservice@broadviewpress.com)

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions – Chapters 2 & 3**

**A. Terms:**

1. Define each of the terms below *using your own words*. (Tempting as it is to quote from or use the same phrases in the book, doing so won’t enable deep understanding.). Consult the book’s glossary if you need additional help (but don’t copy!).
   1. reporting expression
   2. double-reporting
   3. gist notes
   4. abstractions
   5. levels of generality
   6. direct vs indirect reported speech

**B. Citation:**

1. Chapter 2 explains that scholars don’t cite sources merely to “back up” their ideas or to give them authority. For what other reasons, then, do they cite other scholars?
2. What purposes do non-scholarly voices play in academic writing? Do the ways in which scholars cite these non-scholarly voices differ from the ways in which they cite other scholars? If so, how?
3. What does the scholarly practice of citation suggest about how scholars think about knowledge and how it’s made?

**C. Summary:**

1. Review the sample gist notes on the passage on pages 34-35. What do these examples suggest are the characteristics of (ideal) gist notes?
2. What is the function of a) abstractions, b) mid-level generalization, and c) low-level details? How do they work together to communicate scholarly concepts? [Hint: read the caption for Figure 3.1 (page 39).]
3. What does “reading for gist” help readers understand? What does it allow us to do?
4. What contributions to scholarly conversations are made by summary? (What purposes does it serve?)
5. Explain how each action below is a way of “taking a position”:
   1. using reporting expressions
   2. selecting certain abstractions and details to include, and “forgetting” others
   3. choosing the order of ideas to represent
   4. identifying the research method or the disciplinary framework (e.g., “a post-colonial analysis”)
   5. applying the ideas of the original to new examples
   6. identifying limitations in the original

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 4**

1. What do scholarly writers need to do when they summarize passages that are predominantly a) high-level or b) low-level?
2. How, if at all, do the choices a summarizer makes reflect the summarizer’s position?
3. What is a *conceptual summary* and how does it differ from what is often described as a “plot summary”?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 5**

**A. Terms:**

1. Define each of the following terms *using your own words* . Consult the book’s glossary for additional help (but don’t copy!).
   1. mutual knowledge
   2. presupposition (include what forms presupposition can take)
   3. assertion

**B. Concepts:**

*Note: “TAP” = think aloud protocol*

1. Why isn’t there a single standard of “good” writing?
2. Who is/are the audience or audiences for student writing? How can student writers meet the needs of their audience or audiences?
3. What problems can student writers face with a) presupposition and b) assertion? What are some of the ways in which students can work to avoid those issues?
4. During the TAP feedback process, what does a) the reader and b) the writer do, specifically?
5. What do you think writers do, ideally, *after* getting TAP-style feedback?
6. Review the examples of TAP commentary on pages 90, 93, and 104, as well as the “Guidelines for Readers” on pages 91-92. How, if at all, does it differ from the commentary you have received on your own writing in the past?
7. How should TAP readers handle issues with grammar or spelling?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 6**

1. What does it mean to “orchestrate voices”? Why might a writer choose to do so?
2. How does a writer “take a position” while orchestrating other writers? [You may wish to draw on and repurpose elements from your answer to AWRQ 2-3 #5.]
3. Why do scholars take care to use double-reporting expressions? What standard of ethical research practices does this use uphold?
4. Giltrow et al. outline three different types of orchestration scholars might use in bringing together sources into a conversation (see below). For each kind, identify a) what special considerations the summarizer might take into account for this type of summarizing situation and b) how the summarizer could address those considerations through the practice of orchestrating voices.
   1. Scholars already “in conversation” (one cites another) [See pages 115-16.]
   2. Scholars talking about the same idea, issue, or research site (shared topic) [See page 117.]
   3. Scholars using the same abstractions, but in very different ways or contexts [See page 117-19.]
5. Some sources can be challenging for students to categorize, and for that reason challenging for them to introduce properly. Is each of the following sources scholarly or popular, and why? How would you characterize each one in a reporting expression?
   1. Textbooks
   2. Scholarly book reviews
   3. Wikipedia
6. What are some of the discursive features that suggest to the reader that a source is popular rather than scholarly?
7. Scholars sometimes write for general audiences or for students, rather than for other scholars. How are they likely to speak differently when writing for those audiences, compared to when they are writing for a scholarly audience?
8. Why might older scholarly sources need special introduction? Why should we sometimes be cautious about using them?
9. Why might scholars in different disciplines define “older scholarly sources” somewhat differently?
10. In addition to citing scholarly sources in your research papers, you may choose to use popular sources such as blog posts, newspaper stories, or comments on social media as sources of information or commentary). Why is it advisable to introduce those sources in a somewhat different way from the way in which you introduce your scholarly sources? What sort of different approach might you take?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions – Chapter 7**

**A. Terms:**

1. Define each of the following terms *using your own words*. Consult the book’s glossary for additional help (but don’t copy!).
   1. apposition
   2. sustained definition
   3. formal definition
   4. prestige abstraction

**B. Concepts:**

1. In this chapter, we learn that in academic writing definition does far more than “infor[m] the uninformed” (137). What are some of the different things that a writer may accomplish by defining terms? In particular, how do definitions
   1. help writers meet the needs of their different scholarly readers?
   2. develop the writers’ arguments?
2. The chapter explains the different ways you can structure an apposition. What are these ways? Give an example of each. You should have at least 7 in your list.
3. Some definitions are provided in a subtle and brief aside, usually by means of apposition, while others are offered in a sustained and formal way and presented explicitly as definitions.. For what purposes might a writer want to offer a more explicit and/or sustained definition of a term? For what purposes might a writer want to define terms in a more subtle and/or brief way?
4. Many writers confuse “i.e.” and “e.g.” How is “i.e.” distinct from “e.g.”?
5. How can understanding the social nature of abstractions (and, by extension, the social nature of knowledge production) help *student* writers in their work for their different courses?
6. The chapter spends significant time talking about abstractions. What’s the connection between abstractions and definitions?
7. Think of any course you are taking. What are some of the prestige abstractions of that discipline?
8. Considering all the disciplines in which you are taking or have taken courses, identify an abstraction that is frequently used in more than one discipline. Can you see any differences in how that abstraction is understood in the different contexts?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 8**

1. What discursive features do scholarly readers expect in a scholarly introduction, and why?
2. Why might scholarly readers find fault with the following two examples of opening sentences?
   1. Throughout human history, humans have sought to understand who they are.
   2. Imagination is a powerful force in our daily lives.
3. How can we produce “secured generalization[s]” (161)? Why do we need to?
4. Make a short list of some reporting verbs typical of a) scholarly writing and b) popular writing (print journalism, blogging, etc.).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scholarly reporting verbs | Popular Writing |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

1. Define (in your own words) the terms a) “state of knowledge” and b) “knowledge deficit,” and explain the discursive features writers use in constructing each.
2. What are some ways *student* researchers can identify knowledge deficits? [See pages184-86.]

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 9**

1. What is the difference between a social response and a cognitive response?
2. The chapter describes how readers develop “filing systems” to help them manage their “mental desktops.” Think of specific discursive techniques, discussed in this chapter and others in *Academic Writing;* what are some ways we can signal to readers what to do with what we are telling them in order to help keep their “desktops” tidy (197-99)?
3. How can scholarly writers use abstractions to help scholarly readers interpret what they are being told and understand its relevance?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 10**

**A. Terms:**

1. Define each of the following terms *using your own words*. Consult the book’s glossary for additional help (but don’t copy!).
   1. Nominalization
   2. Noun phrases

**B. Concepts:**

1. What challenges do agentless noun phrases present to readers?
2. How does nominalization relate to different levels of generality? [See chapters 3 & 4 as well as this chapter.]
3. How do noun phrases help readers manage the information on their mental desktops?
4. What specific techniques can scholarly writers use to help readers comprehend noun phrases? Give examples of each technique.

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 11**

1. When do scholars use the “discursive I,” and for what purposes?
2. Have any of your current or previous instructors forbidden students to use “I” in essays? If so, have they explained why, and how persuasive have you found the explanation?
3. Provide below at least four examples each of agentless forecasts, cleft forecasts, and statements of emphasis. (You may find examples in scholarly readings from outside the textbook as well as from *Academic Writing; An Introduction*.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agentless Forecasts | Cleft Forecasts | Emphasis |
|  |  |  |

1. How do agentless and cleft forecast constructions add emphasis?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 12**

1. What characterizes a) *quantitative* and b) *qualitative* research methods? How does each method “establish the authority of [its] generalizations” (255)?
2. What are some of the limitations of a) quantitative and b) qualitative research?
3. What kinds of research (or what sorts of projects) does each research method—quantitative and qualitative—particularly suit, and why? (It might help to think of examples research methods from other courses you’re currently taking or have taken.)
4. What functions do methods sections (or, in some disciplines, methods statements) perform? What discursive features might we expect to find in them, and why?
5. Chapter 12 considers examples from qualitative research in which the “methodological I” expands to discuss the researcher’s own experiences and “subject position” (264), as well as the researcher’s role in the “knowledge-making process” (263). What does the relative rarity of the practice of discussing the researcher’s subject position suggest about the expectations and assumptions scholars hold regarding academic research?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 13**

**A. Terms:**

1. Define each of the following terms *using your own words*. Consult the book’s glossary for additional help (but don’t copy!).
   1. Knowledge-making I
   2. For each of the following rhetorical elements, in addition to providing a definition, also explain its effects (i.e., why might a writer use this strategy?).
   3. Agentless expressions
   4. Statements of obviousness
   5. Modality / modal expressions
   6. Limiting expressions
2. Provide below at least three examples each of modal expressions, limiting expressions, and statements of obviousness. (You may find examples in scholarly readings from outside the textbook as well as from *Academic Writing; An Introduction*.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Modal expressions | Limiting Expressions | Statements of obviousness |
|  |  |  |

**B. Concepts:**

1. What is the relationship between modalized statements and knowledge deficits?
2. What role can reported speech play in demonstrating the process of knowledge-making (i.e., a writer’s “reasoning, inference, speculation, and even subjectivity” [273])?
3. The chapter notes that it is scholarly convention to use the simple present in reporting expressions to report research findings. What does the simple present tense convey?
4. What does the use of each of the following tenses convey: a) present progressive, b) present perfect, and c) simple past?

***Academic Writing* Reading Questions Chapter 14**

1. What functions do scholarly conclusions perform, and what are some discursive features scholars will use to signal those functions? How are scholarly conclusions different from the conclusions typical of high school essays?
2. Who does informed consent protect, and why it is important?
3. What implications might the considerations of research ethics raised in this chapter have for students designing or conducting a research project of their own for one of their courses?
4. How do scholarly statements of moral obligation, as described in this chapter, differ from statements of moral obligation that we might find in other writing situations? How do these differences reflect the values and practices of academic knowledge-making?
5. What does the nature of scholarly statements of moral obligation suggest about the role of scholars and scholarship outside the academy?
6. Think of the writing you are expected to do in other courses. In which ones, if any, might you often expect to make statements of moral obligation in your conclusions?