

Academic style can differ across text types. Lectures, for example, can be fairly informal and interactive; alternatively, they can be more formal in style. Similarly, some academic textbooks are considerably more formal than others. It is useful to notice the features that contribute to the style of a text, so that you can use appropriate features in your own written and spoken work.

TASK 1 Noticing and understanding different academic styles

1 Read Texts 1 and 2 and decide which is more formal in style.

TEXT 1

At night we lose our abilities to see colours completely. If you lead a sad and uninteresting life you may have this book as bedtime reading; if so, turn off the light and try looking at Figure 0.3 in your dimly lit bedroom. You will no longer be able to see the number 74. Indeed, a simple glance around the room will tell you that there is no colour anywhere. How can this be? Surely a green object will still be green even if there is not much light around? Not so. 'Green-ness' is an invention of your brain, and if there is not enough light around it cannot create this particular magic we call colour.

SOURCE: Snowden, R., Thompson, P., & Troscianko, T. 2006. p.5. *Basic Vision: An Introduction to Visual Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

TEXT 2

The law is rarely uncontroversial. While lawyers and politicians habitually venerate its merits, reformers bewail its inadequacies, and sceptics refute the law's often self-righteous espousal of justice, liberty, and the rule of law. Few, however, would deny that, in most societies, law has become a significant instrument for progress and improvement in our social, political, moral, and economic life.

SOURCE: Wacks, R. 2008. p.2. *Law: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Complete the table using information from the texts.

	Feature of style	Text	Example
1	addresses the audience as 'you'	1	<i>If you lead a sad and uninteresting life ...</i>
2	uses difficult, old-fashioned words		
3	uses less formal words		
4	writes incomplete sentences, i.e. not a full subject, verb, etc.		
5	uses humour to engage the audience		
6	uses a rhetorical question, i.e. a question which is answered by the person who asks it		
7	uses a 'Classical' style, e.g. listing terms for stylistic effect		

TASK 2 Evaluating features of academic style

1 Decide which features of style in Task 1.2 are appropriate for you to use in:

- i an essay
- ii a spoken presentation.

2 Write a short introductory paragraph giving an overview of an aspect of your own area of study. Use the most appropriate aspects of style from Texts 1 and 2.