

Academic style can be both objective and subjective, depending on context and purpose. Objectivity is associated with facts and research which can be replicated (repeated). Subjectivity is closely connected to stance and evaluation. Identifying subjective and objective features of academic style helps you to understand the presentation of facts and the writer's stance, and express ideas appropriately in your own writing.

## TASK 1 Identifying objective and subjective language in texts

1 Read Texts 1 and 2, including the title of each extract and the title of the book, given in the reference. Decide which text, if any, appears to be more objective:

- i in terms of subject-matter and content
- ii in terms of language and style.

### How to measure intelligence

TEXT 1

The link between reduced intellect and crime was made because it was assumed that intelligence was linked to the ability to learn and understand complex societal norms and rules. Furthermore, it was considered that those of low intellect were less able to control their emotions and their behaviour. It was not until around 1900 that reasonably reliable tests to assess intelligence were produced. The first generally accepted test was constructed by Binet and Simon, and was called the 'Scale of Intelligence'. By 1908 they had assigned each test to a mental age. For example, an average 7-year-old could do certain tasks which would be too difficult for an average 6-year-old. The level of the hardest tasks performed represented the mental age of the individual. These form the basis for the intelligence tests which are still used today.

SOURCE: Williams, K.S. (2008). p.272. *Textbook on Criminology* 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### The idea that time has no structure

TEXT 2

Now we know enough about standard views of the structure of time in order to discuss whether time might have less structure than standardly assumed. Julian Barbour has made the radical proposal that there is no fundamental temporal structure. Actually, this is not quite the way that he expresses it. He says things like 'time does not exist'. He also makes radical claims about the non-existence of space, some of which we will discuss in Chapter 5. (See Barbour, 2000, for a popular account of many of his ideas.) I do not want to claim that I am representing his views accurately or completely. In this chapter I just want to discuss the idea that there is no fundamental temporal structure, while crediting him with all the insights and arguments that can be used to defend this idea.

SOURCE: Arntzenius, F. (2012). p.19. *Space, Time, & Stuff*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Complete the table using examples from the texts, and decide whether they are more associated with objectivity or subjectivity.

Feature of style	Example (Text)	Associated with objectivity or subjectivity
Use of the passive voice to avoid stating who did something	<i>It was assumed that (Text 1)</i>	Objectivity
Use of the first person, i.e. <i>I</i> and <i>we</i>		
Use of impersonal structures, e.g. <i>It was assumed / considered that ...</i>		
Adverbs such as <i>just</i> and <i>actually</i>		
Adverbs such as <i>furthermore</i> and <i>reasonably</i>		
Introducing citations using expressions such as <i>he says things like ...</i>		
Referring to authors using surname only		
Referring to authors using first name and surname		