**Introduction to Academic English**

Academic English is the genre of English used in the world of research, study, teaching and universities. If you read an article in an academic journal or listen to someone giving a presentation or a talk about an academic subject in an academic environment, Academic English is probably being used.

Academic English has usually the following features:

* **AE** **uses formal academic language and avoids colloquialisms**
* **AE usually avoids 'I' and is written in the third person and often uses impersonal structures**
* **AE is objective and impartial**
* **AE often uses the passive voice, infinitive structures, and participles**
* **AE consists of many references to other writers**
* **AE texts are well structured**
* **AE has well developed paragraphs which often start with a strong topic sentence**
* **AE contains linking words which give the text cohesion**

**The underlined features are the ones we are going to have a closer look at.**

**The infinitive structures**

**There are FOUR infinitives in English:**

**To do – present simple inf.**

**To be doing – present continuous inf.**

**To have done – perfect simple inf.**

**To have been doing – perfect continuous inf.**

**You may be used to using only one, but with academic English one very often uses so-called condensed structures using infinitives. For this, you need to be able to use all infinitives there are.**

**Condensed structures in English using infinitives**

**Condensing means that you “condense” usually a complex sentence into one sentence using appropriate infinitive structure depending on the original meaning.**

**The sentences we usually condense are the one starting with IT subject (it seems, it appears, it is said/believed/thought/….. that……….)**

***When condensing, we have to replace IT with the subject of the other sentence. We keep the word following IT (just remember that the number may differ, thus instead of “seems, appears, is believed” we may get “seem, appear, are believed)***

**It seems he wants to go out. – HE seems to want to go out.**

**It seems they want to go out – THEY SEEM to want to go out.**

***We have to keep the same form. When the verb in the other sentence (clause) is in continuous form, we have to use an infinitive in continuous form.***

**It appears she is crying. – She appears to BE CRYING.**

**It appears they are arguing again. – They appear to BE ARGUING again.**

***When condensing, we also have to keep the same meaning. If the other sentence (clause) contains any kind of past tense (it doesn´t matter if it´s past simple, present perfect or past perfect) we have to use “perfect infinitive” to convey the very same meaning. The only thing we have to be careful about is the form – either simple or continuous.***

**It is believed that he wrote some plays for Shakespeare. – He is believed to have written…..**

**It is said that they have been hiding for ages. – They are said to have been hiding for ages.**

**It is believed that the virus originated in China. The virus is believed to have originated in China.**

***When condensing a sentence containing WILL, we use a present simple infinitive.***

**It is said the President will visit Germany next month. – The President is said** to visit**….**

**Participles and participle clauses**

Participle clauses enable us to say information in a more economical way. They are formed using **present participles** (*going*, *reading*, *seeing*, *walking*, etc.), **past** **participles** (*gone*, *read*, *seen*, *walked*, etc.) or **perfect participles** (*having gone*, *having read*, *having seen*, *having walked*, etc.).

We can use participle clauses when the participle and the verb in the main clause have the same subject. For example,

*Waiting for Ellie, I made some tea.* (*While* ***I*** *was waiting for Ellie,* ***I*** *made some tea.*)

Participle clauses do not have a specific tense. The tense is indicated by the verb in the main clause.

Participle clauses are mainly used in written texts, particularly in a literary, academic or journalistic style.

**Present participle clauses**

Here are some common ways we use present participle clauses. Note that present participles have a similar meaning to active verbs.

* To give the result of an action  
  *The bomb exploded,* ***destroying the building****.*
* To give the reason for an action  
  ***Knowing she loved reading****, Richard bought her a book.*
* To talk about an action that happened at the same time as another action  
  ***Standing in the queue****, I realised I didn't have any money.*
* To add information about the subject of the main clause  
  ***Starting in the new year****, the new policy bans cars in the city centre.*

**Past participle clauses**

Here are some common ways that we use past participle clauses. Note that past participles normally have a passive meaning.

* With a similar meaning to an *if* condition  
  ***Used in this way****, participles can make your writing more concise.* (*If you use participles in this way, …* )
* To give the reason for an action  
  ***Worried by the news****, she called the hospital.*
* To add information about the subject of the main clause  
  ***Filled with pride****, they walked towards the stage.*

**Perfect participle clauses**

Perfect participle clauses show that the action they describe was finished before the action in the main clause. Perfect participles can be structured to make an active or passive meaning.

***Having got dressed****, he slowly went downstairs.****Having finished their training****, they will be fully qualified doctors.****Having been made redundant****, she started looking for a new job.*

**Participle clauses after conjunctions and prepositions**

It is also common for participle clauses, especially with *-ing*, to follow conjunctions and prepositions such as *before*, *after*, *instead of*, *on*, *since*, *when*, *while* and *in spite of*.

***Before cooking****, you should wash your hands.****Instead of complaining about it****, they should try doing something positive.****On (Upon) arriving at the hotel****, he went to get changed.****While packing her things****, she thought about the last two years.****In spite of having read the instructions twice****, I still couldn’t understand how to use it.*

Participle clauses are often referred to as “reduced adverb(ial) clauses”. Here are some examples:

* While I was going to work, I saw something unusual. (Adverb clause)
* *While going to work*, I saw something unusual. (Reduced adverb clause)
* *After I finish the work*, I’ll join you guys. (Adverb clause)
* After finishing the work, I’ll join you guys. (Reduced adverb clause)
* We are definitely going to start our business *after we leave this job*. (Adverb clause)
* We are definitely going to start our business *after leaving this job*. (Reduced adverb clause)
* *Since I was taking my class*, I couldn’t pick up your phone. (Adverb clause)
* *Taking my class*, I couldn’t pick up your phone. (Reduced adverb clause)  
  or
* *Because of taking my class*, I couldn’t pick up your phone. (Reduced adverb clause)
* *Though he was super busy*, he came out to see me. (Adverb clause)
* *Though being super busy*, he came out to see me. (Reduced adverb clause)
* *Because I’m the head trainer*, I have to take responsibilities for all the complaints. (Adverb clause)
* *Being the head trainer*, I have to take responsibilities for all the complaints. (Reduced adverb clause)

## **Points to note**!

1. **When we reduce an adverb clause of time and an adverb clause of concession to an adverb phrase, we don’t remove the subordinating conjunction.**  
     
   After I left the office, I went to his place.  
   After leaving the office, I went to his place.  
     
   Although I was sleeping, I could hear you.  
   Although sleeping, I could hear you.
2. **When an adverb clause of reason is reduced to a phrase, we remove the subordinating conjunction.**  
     
   Because she was frustrated with him, she left him.  
   Being frustrated with him, she left him.
3. **If the subject of the main clause and the subject of the adverb clause are different, we can’t reduce the adverb clause. It is too confusing.**  
     
   Because you are my friend, I will let you drive my car.  
   Being my friend, I will let you drive my car.

Conjunctions and cohesive devices to be careful about!

**YET** – not only is YET an adverbial of time used in present perfect tenses (I haven´t done it yet). It also can be used at the very beginning of a sentences. Thus it contrasts the meaning of the sentence with the previous one(s). (He smoked too many cigarettes. Yet his lungs were in a very good condition.)

**Whereas/while** – these two conjunctions have the very same meaning and are used when contrasting two pieces of information. (Whereas she likes people, he hates them)

**Despite/in spite of** – used to emphasize the contrast. Tricky from grammar point of view. When using despite/in spite of one has to bear in mind that what follows is an OBJECT. The object can have a form of a noun, object case pronoun (her, him, them….) and a gerund. You can simply use a sort of stuffing **the fact that** because it also serves as an object.

Despite she didn´t like it, she bought it – WRONG

Despite the fact that she didn´t like it, she bought it – RIGHT

Despite her not liking it, she bought it – RIGHT

**Be likely to** – used to say that something is possible to happen. You can use a range of words to modify the possibility (more, most, less, least, very, highly etc.)

He is very likely to win. It is most likely to snow.

### Active / Passive Overview

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Active | Passive |
| Simple Present | Once a week, Tom **cleans** the house. | Once a week, the house **is cleaned** by Tom. |
| Present Continuous | Right now, Sarah **is writing** the letter. | Right now, the letter **is being written** by Sarah. |
| Simple Past | Sam **repaired** the car. | The car **was repaired** by Sam. |
| Past Continuous | The salesman **was helping** the customer when the thief came into the store. | The customer **was being helped** by the salesman when the thief came into the store. |
| Present Perfect | Many tourists **have visited** that castle. | That castle **has been visited** by many tourists. |
| Present Perfect Continuous | Recently, John **has been doing** the work. | Recently, the work **has been being done** by John. |
| Past Perfect | George **had repaired** many cars before he received his mechanic's license. | Many cars **had been repaired** by George before he received his mechanic's license. |
| Past Perfect Continuous | Chef Jones **had been preparing** the restaurant's fantastic dinners for two years before he moved to Paris. | The restaurant's fantastic dinners **had been being prepared** by Chef Jones for two years before he moved to Paris. |
| Simple Future will | Someone **will finish** the work by 5:00 PM. | The work **will be finished** by 5:00 PM. |
| Future Continuous will | At 8:00 PM tonight, John **will be washing** the dishes. | At 8:00 PM tonight, the dishes **will be being washed** by John. |
| Future Perfect will | They **will have completed** the project before the deadline. | The project **will have been completed** before the deadline. |

When to use passive the passive voice

**1.** When the agent of the action is **unknown**:

My wallet **was stolen** last night. (we don’t know who stole the wallet)

**2.** When the agent is **unimportant**:

The new students’ centre **was completed** last week. (the people who built the centre are unnecessary information for the meaning of the sentence)

**3.** When the agent of the action is **obvious** from the context:

I **was born** in March of '55. (Everyone knows that it was my mother bore me then)

**4.** To **emphasize** the recipient (receiver) of the action:

a. Only Jane **was injured** in the accident; the remainder of the passengers were unhurt.(we want Jane to be the subject of the sentence and at the beginning to emphasize her importance)

b. Erina **was chosen** as best student, and of course this made her happy. (the **teacher** who chose Erina is not what we want to emphasize)

**5.** To make **generic statements**, announcements, and explanations:

a. Something **should be done** about the traffic jams in this town.

b. Patrons **are asked** not to smoke.

c. **It's said** that it's going to rain tonight.(Often, people will say, 'They say that it's going to rain tonight', the **they** being the weatherman.)