

Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research: A Guide for Teachers

English for Academic Research

Series editor

Adrian Wallwork

Pisa

Italy

This series aims to help non-native, English-speaking researchers communicate in English. The books in this series are designed like manuals or user guides to help readers find relevant information quickly, and assimilate it rapidly and effectively. The author has divided each book into short subsections of short paragraphs with many bullet points.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13913>

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English for Academic Research: A Guide for Teachers



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Introduction

Who is this book for?

This book was written for English language teachers who

- are experienced EFL teachers and wish to embark on a new challenge: teaching students doing a PhD or postgraduate course how to write their papers, present their research at international conferences, and communicate with the research community. This sector of teaching is a sub-sector of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
- wish to use the *English for Academic Research* series in their English language courses

This book is intended for native speakers of English.

What kind of teacher's book is this? Is it a step-by-step guide to using all the books in the series?

The *English for Academic Research* series is not a series of student coursebooks. The books are self-study guides that can be used by students alone or in class with a teacher.

So the book you are holding in your hands now is not a step-by-step guide to all the sections in the various books of the series.

Instead the book provides a syllabus / lesson plans that you can use as a basis for holding scientific English courses.

By reading this book you will also get

- a clear idea of the academic world in terms of publishing papers and presenting research
- suggestions on how to teach the concepts outlined in the two main books in the series: *English for Writing Research Papers* and *English for Presentations at International Conferences*

My aim is to give you the confidence to teach academic / scientific English which, in my opinion as someone who has taught practically every kind of English, is the most exciting and rewarding area of teaching English.

What is *English for Academic Research*? Is it the same as *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP)? Who is the target audience?

EAP refers to the English required by anyone (generally 18 years and over) studying in higher education whose first language is not English but who needs English in order to carry out their university studies or advance their career in English.

The *English for Academic Research* series is aimed at a specific sector of the EAP market: those who need to publish their work in international journals and present their research orally at international conferences. This type of English is often known not just as 'academic' English but also as 'scientific' English.

The target users of the series are thus:

- Master's students
- PhD students
- Postdoctoral students
- Researchers
- Academic staff of all levels (lecturers, assistant professors, full professors)

Two of the books - *English for Writing Research Papers* and *English Grammar Usage and Style* are also aimed at scientific editors, proofreaders and English teachers who supplement their income by revising / editing scientific papers written by their students.

However, even undergraduates can benefit from this series as they too will be called upon to write in 'scientific' English in their essays, theses, assignments and dissertations, and to present their work orally at seminars and workshops.

What are the components of the *English for Academic Research* series?

The two core books are:

English for Writing Research Papers

English for Presentations at International Conferences

These two books are the ones that are referred to most in this teacher's book. Two other books, primarily for self-study are:

English for Academic Correspondence

English for Interacting on Campus

The above four books have the same format and structure, and are written in the same style.

There is a reference grammar book which both you and your students can consult:

English for Academic Research: Grammar, Usage and Style

There are also three exercise books:

English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises

English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

The exercise books are primarily designed to support the writing skills outlined in *English for Writing Research Papers*. The exercises in these books can be integrated into your course by being set for homework. This teacher's book does not tell you actually how to use each exercise, but rather which exercises to use to supplement the core books.

What key differences are there between this book and other guides to teaching academic English?

This book focuses on how to teach students to write reader-focused texts and give audience-focused oral presentations. This reader / audience focus is key to your students' success in the world of academia. Thus this book differs from other EAP teacher's books / guides / manuals, which tend to see everything from the writer's (i.e. your student's) point of view and thus teach them how to sound impressive and supposedly academic, rather than clear.

The whole series of *English for Academic Research* is designed so that:

- you can cherry pick, i.e. you are not forced to do a whole load of exercises that you don't want to
- you can download the chapters you think are the most useful
- you can exploit a series of fun and stimulating introductory activities
- everything you teach has real practical value for your students

What is the main focus of this book? Which skills are covered the most?

WRITING SKILLS are given the most focus in this book. Writing and publishing a paper demands skills that are not normally taught in the world of EFL (though have some overlap with Business English). You will need to get a handle on these skills if your students are going to benefit from your courses.

PRESENTATION SKILLS are fairly intuitive and are not difficult to learn (though are difficult to put into practice). Presentations skills are also fun to teach, but it may not be immediately clear how to teach them. Several chapters of this book are therefore dedicated to helping you with this aspect.

CORRESPONDENCE, INTERACTION WITH PROFESSORS, AND SOCIAL LIFE Written correspondence (i.e. what is covered in *English for Academic Correspondence*) and social life on campus, including interactions with professors (i.e. what is covered in *English for Interacting on Campus*), are areas that you yourself are likely to have personal experience of from your student days and should therefore be easier for you to teach as skills. They are thus only covered marginally in this teacher's book.

GRAMMAR SKILLS are covered in *English for Writing Research Papers* and in *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises*. In addition, *English for Academic Research: Grammar Usage and Style* covers all those aspects of grammar that students will need when writing papers. Thus not all grammar is covered, only that required to write academic texts.

READING SKILLS are not covered in *English for Academic Research*. You can draw on your knowledge of reading skills that you exploited when teaching general English - the same skills apply in academic English.

VOCABULARY SKILLS are dealt with in terms of formal vs informal, and concrete vs abstract. Also, there is an entire exercise book (*English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises*) dealing with discriminating between similar sets of words commonly used in academia. However, there are no vocabulary building exercises as such. Your students may be studying highly varying disciplines so it would be hard to teach them all the same vocabulary. However, if you are interested in generic academic vocabulary (e.g. test, experiment, trial) then there are many free word lists available (e.g. <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm>)

LISTENING SKILLS are covered only to the extent of strategies for understanding native English speakers and understanding university lectures - see Chapters 6 and 9 in *English for Interacting on Campus*. Again this is because listening skills in academia are hardly different from the skills usually required in normal life and thus covered in general English courses.

My aim in this book is not to cover areas that you can easily find elsewhere. I just want to concentrate on what your students really need to know, and what for you would be difficult to find in any other teacher's book.

How is this book organized?

This book is divided into four parts.

Part 1 Academic Written English: What it is and how to teach it

This part explains everything you need to know about the world of academia, the writing of research papers, and the role of journal editors and reviewers. Part 1 thus covers syntax and grammar issues, short vs long sentences, paragraphing, exploiting student's own materials, drawing comparisons between academic writing and other forms of writing, and injecting some fun into your lessons.

Part 2 Academic Presentations: What they are and how to teach them

This part gives some very practical suggestions on how to help your students improve their presentations skills.

Part 3 Strategies for Teaching Writing and Presenting

The two chapters in this part show you how to teach academic skills but using non-academic examples, as well as how to provide evidence to students of the importance of what you are teaching them. A few suggestions are given on how to deal with multinational and multicultural groups.

Part 4 Syllabus and lessons plans

This part suggests two main syllabuses - one for a writing course and the other for a presentations course. This is a step-by-step guide on what to cover in each lesson, and how to incorporate sections from the *English for Academic Research* series into your lessons.

Does the series cover both science and humanities students?

Yes, but the bias is towards scientific research. Historians, philosophers, and other humanists often tend to write in their native language and attend fewer international conferences. When they do write in English their English is particularly arcane (as is the English of the native speakers!) and thus difficult to decipher. It may surprise you but it is actually much easier to revise and edit papers written by scientists than it is by humanists.

Why should I want to teach EAP / scientific English?

I've taught every type of English, and scientific English is without doubt the most stimulating and rewarding.

You will learn a ton of interesting information about your students' research areas thus opening you up to a completely new world. In addition your students will probably

- be more motivated to learn than any other students you have ever had - improving their English relates directly to them being able to continue conducting their research

- come from many different countries (even if you are teaching in a non-English-speaking country) - PhD students travel the world in search of opportunities to study with particular professors in particular labs and in particular courses. Having a multicultural class is fascinating
- show the fastest progress that you have ever witnessed - you will be teaching them specific skills that they can apply immediately. The results can be very rewarding for you as a teacher
- enjoy themselves more in your class than in most classes that they are obliged to attend. This is because you are teaching them skills (writing papers, presenting CVs, email, and communication in general) that are not only fundamental for their success at university, but which will also help them if they work in industry

I am a regular EFL teacher. Will I be able to use *English for Academic Research* series?

Yes.

You certainly need to have had a few years' experience in teaching general English to adults. Even better if you have also taught Business English - Business English and Scientific English have much in common.

If you have had no EFL experience but have a degree in science then this would partially make up for your lack of teaching experience.

I believe that a good academic English teacher, like a good EFL teacher, needs to

- be a good communicator with a curiosity about people of all types
- have a lively interest in English (and languages in general) and a willingness to study its grammar - which in the case of 'scientific' English can be quite different from the standard English grammar you would teach in a general English course
- teach what is necessary rather than what is sometimes prescribed

In addition to these three factors, you need to understand the life of PhD students and researchers, what the publication of research articles entails and how international conferences operate. You also need to become exposed to all the types of emails and letters that such people write in their daily life.

If you have already taught Business English then this could be the next logical step in your career. Like Business English teaching Scientific English is incredibly satisfying as you are really helping your students to progress in their careers through a series of short-term goals (e.g. drafting a manuscript, preparing for a poster session at a conference, writing a CV, dealing with referees' comments on their paper).

Given that there are far fewer teachers of Scientific English than Business English you can command a much greater fee for your services and you can supplement your income very nicely by editing the work of non-native researchers.

What are the possible pitfalls to this book?

On the market there are a few guides to teaching EAP but as far as I know there are no guides to teaching English specifically to PhD students and researchers. Nor do I know of any journals, SIGs (special interest groups), or conferences devoted to this topic. So although there are plenty of us around the world teaching English in universities at very high levels, what you are reading now may well be the first introduction to teaching scientific English ever written (but please correct me if I am wrong ...). As explained above this is not a guide to teaching scientific English, but rather an introduction to teaching scientific English and a guide to how to exploit the books in this *English for Academic Research* series.

I contacted several teachers while preparing this book, but inevitably my personal experience is likely to prevail and may not totally match yours.

For this reason I would be very grateful if you could contact me (adrian.wallwork@gmail.com) and let me know whether or not this book has fulfilled your expectations, and if it hasn't what changes and additions you would like to see in future editions. Thank you.

The author

Since 1984 Adrian Wallwork has been editing and revising scientific papers, as well as teaching English as a foreign language. In 2000 he began specializing in training PhD students from all over the world in how to write and present their research in English. He is the author of over 30 textbooks for Springer Science+Business Media, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, the BBC, and many other publishers.

With his wife, Anna Southern, Adrian runs an editing agency for researchers whose native language is not English - English for Academics (E4AC). They revise, proof-read and edit over a million words a year - but find it much easier to find typos in the works of others rather than in their own! So if you find any typos in this book please contact Adrian: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com. Thanks.

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Part I
Academic Written English:
What It Is and How to Teach It

Chapter 1

What Is EAP / Scientific English? What Do I Need to Do to Prepare Myself to Teach Scientific English?

1.1 In this book, how are the terms *Academic English* and *Scientific English* used?

In terms of this book, *academic English* means any English used in formal texts and presentations by students, researchers and teaching staff of any discipline. For me, *scientific English* is a subset of academic English, and is the English used by those studying scientific subjects (e.g. chemistry, biology, engineering, mathematics) rather than humanistic subjects such as history or philosophy. In any case, there is no clear distinction and even humanist subjects can be very 'scientific', e.g. the philosophy of mathematics.

1.2 What is *Academic English*?

It's crucial to understand that there isn't just one type of academic English. It differs massively depending on whether the author is studying humanities (often long-winded, abstract and full of jargon) or one of the pure sciences (very technical but potentially clear and concrete).

The style also differs massively from writer to writer. Some native and non-natives authors alike write very well (clear and well structured), and others very badly (murky and badly organized).

It is dangerous to talk of 'academic English' as if it were a homogeneous style. You should be wary of teaching books and students books that present academic English

as if it were a style that all academics use and as if it always has certain characteristics such as:

- use of passive voice
- use of abstract nouns
- long sentences
- use of Latinate rather than Anglo-Saxon vocabulary

To get a quick idea of the various types of academic English, look at Chapter 13 in *English for Writing Research Papers* where you will find a variety of abstracts from many different disciplines, both scientific and humanistic. See in particular subsections: 13.8, 13.10, 13.15, 13.22, 13.23, 13.24.

In summary: academic English varies massively, there is no single definition of what it is.

1.3 Are the rules of Academic English the same for all disciplines?

Unfortunately not. Students need to download the 'instructions to authors' from the journal's website to see what their specific journal requires. The format of the paper (particularly the Abstract) varies from discipline to discipline and journal to journal. Even the order of the sections differs considerably. The use of *we* vs the passive form also varies, and some journals even allow the first person singular.

For example, below are some instructions from a physics journal. Physics tends to be one of the most 'conservative' disciplines there is. The guidelines, which I have edited, come from a CERN site and reflect the kind of guidelines that students are likely to come across. The numbers (i.e. 1-10) are mine - see my comments below the guidelines.

- 1) Language : Notes are expected to be written in British English. Please always refer to the Oxford English Dictionary.
- 2) Avoid the use of "we", "us", "one". Physics is supposed to be independent of the person(s) in charge of writing the note. To adopt a lower profile with respect to Physics, use the passive form instead, e.g. always prefer "A study is presented" to "We present a study". Similarly a note (or a figure or a section) does not describe / present / show anything by itself. Prefer "A study is presented in this note" to "This note describes a study".