

Your academic 'voice': Finding your academic identity

Your unique academic 'voice' will emerge as you develop your specific interests within your field, and understand the differing theories and points of view that underpin your subject area.

For example, as an education student one might find the constructivist approach of Vygotsky (1978) engaging and useful; another student may find the behaviourist theories of Skinner (1976) more convincing. In practice, you may find elements of many different theories and research contribute to your overall understanding and interpretation of your subject.

Ways in which you can develop your identity:

- read around your subject and find the areas of practice and theory that resonate with you.
- map out the 'territory' of your field of study - what are the possible standpoints? Evaluate them in terms of strengths and weaknesses, consider context - is one approach more valid than another at a particular time or place?

How do I develop an academic 'voice' in my work?

You are expected to write in an 'academic style' but also include your own ideas: how can this be done? Your writing needs to be formal and include evidence to support all your arguments and ideas. Whilst doing this you will develop your own interpretation and ways of expressing your ideas; this is known as your 'voice'.

Key skills for developing your academic voice	What can help?
Edit and proofread your work to ensure it meets the highest academic standards.	Look for editing and proofreading tips and techniques on the Skills Hub .
Be honest in your presentation of your work: always credit your sources. Don't plagiarise or in other ways misrepresent yourself.	Use the relevant reference guides for your subject to ensure you cite and reference your sources correctly.
Be prepared to justify your views to others in a rational way.	Review the Skills Hub resources on developing your argument .
Absorb and use the language, terminology and vocabulary of your discipline; you will encounter it in books, articles and seminars that you attend.	Create your own glossary and get into the habit of using these terms.

Further Reading

Creame, P. and Lea, M. R. (2008) *Writing at university: A guide for students*. 3rd ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Osmond, A. (2016) *Academic writing and grammar for students*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Robbins, S. P. (2016) Finding your voice as an academic writer (and writing clearly). *Journal of Social Work Education* [online]. **52**(2), pp. 133-135. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10437797.2016.1151267>

References

Skinner, B. F. (1976) *About behaviorism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.