Learning
Development

Academic Style: the essentials.

Check your work for **TOPIC!**

T for **The full words**, not contractions:
- Contractions are short forms of two words, like 'don't' (do not), 'can't' (cannot), 'I'll' (I will), and so on.
- Write the full word.

O for **Objective,** avoid emotional language:
- Don't use adjectives like 'terrible', 'sad', 'impressive', which are all feelings. Simply remove these from your work. (Unless the emotion is the subject of your assignment!).
- Avoid any words which are intended to make your reader feel a particular emotion, or which express your emotion.

P for **Precise,** avoid vague terms:
- Words like 'thing', 'stuff' and phrases like 'lots of' are vague.
- Instead, use more accurate terms, for example instead of 'things we do', say 'particular behaviours or actions' (which terms depends on the subject – draw on your sources to identify useful terms).
- Instead of 'lots of', use phrases like 'a significant amount' or 'significant number' or 'significant proportion' or even better, give a particular quantity e.g. more than half.

I for **Impersonal,** avoid 'I', 'you' and 'we':
- Instead of 'you' or 'we', use specific terms for the groups people you are writing to or about, such as 'teachers', 'managers', 'employees', 'health workers', etc.
- Instead of 'I', re-work your sentences so that instead of saying 'I believe that this means X', say 'This could mean X'.

C for **Cautious,** avoid generalisations:
- Words like 'this is true for everyone'; instead use 'this is often the case for many people'.
- Instead, be precise (see below) and use cautious or hedging language like 'some', 'many', 'in some cases'.
- Add verbs like 'might', 'may' and 'could'.
- Use 'potentially' or 'perhaps'.
- Use verbs like 'tend to', 'indicate' and 'suggest' instead of 'is' or 'will'.
- Don't use all of these at once – it depends on whether what you are saying is fact, interpretation or argument.

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