

GAC008 Academic English II: Reading and Writing Skills

GAC008-aligned reading and writing practice; the centre's assessment brief and referencing rules set the requirements.

From the paragraph to the researched text

Read critically, develop a researched argument and keep borrowed material traceable.

Keep a research trail while taking notes

- 1 **Borrowed idea** Record which source actually supplies the idea and where you found it.
- 2 **Draft** Cite borrowed words or ideas and distinguish them from your own interpretation.
- 3 **Verify** Return to the source to check the claim and complete its reference details.

Decision

Missing citations need source-based repair; this lesson promises no particular grade.

Your turn: repair missing attribution

Your turn

A draft uses borrowed ideas but has no citations. What is the appropriate repair?

- A.** Return to the sources, verify each borrowed claim and add accurate citations and references.
- B.** Invent references that sound relevant.
- C.** Assume good ideas remove the need to cite.
- D.** Change a few words and leave the sources uncredited.

The features of academic writing

Feature	Appropriate use and limit
Voice	Impersonal voice may suit a task; some disciplines permit first person.
Hedging	“May” or “suggests” limits certainty, but evidence is still needed.
Defined terms	State the intended meaning of a key term.
Claim and evidence	A claim may come first; make its support and reasoning clear.

Nominalisation: why academic prose feels dense

- 1 **Start with the action** "We investigated the samples."
- 2 **Turn the process into a noun** "The investigation of the samples."
- 3 **See what changed** The verb becomes a noun phrase: nominalisation.
- 4 **Read dense text by reversing it** Unpack the noun back into who did what, then rebuild the sentence.

Decision

Nominalisation packs information; unpacking it restores the action.

Identify the genre before writing

Genre	Its shape, its reader
A report	Structured sections; a reader who needs findings fast
An essay	A sustained argument; a reader following reasoning
A case study	One instance examined in depth; a reader applying it
A review	Assesses existing work; a reader choosing what to read

Claim and evidence are different animals

Part of the authored sentence	What it does
"The result is robust"	Claim: an assertion needing support.
"Three subsequent studies"	Reported evidence; methods and samples are not supplied here.
"Although early trials were small"	Concession: acknowledges an earlier limitation.
"Suggests"	Hedge: limits certainty without proving the claim.

Stance, and the missing counter-argument

- 1 **Stance** The writer wants readers to accept that the result is robust.
- 2 **Acknowledged limit** “Although” introduces the small early trials.
- 3 **Further check** Inspect the later studies’ methods, samples and actual measure.
- 4 **Boundary** An absent concession alone does not establish dishonesty or a lack of analysis.

Worked example: one sentence, four labels

The sentence

"Although early trials were small, three subsequent studies found the same effect, which suggests the result is robust."

Claim: the result is robust. Evidence: three studies replicating. Concession: the early trials were small. Hedge: suggests.

Reported evidence needs checking: the sentence supplies no study methods or sample details.

Notice

The concession and the hedge are as informative as the claim.

Your turn: label the sentence

Your turn

In “Although the sample was small, two later surveys found a similar pattern, which may support the conclusion”, what is the hedge?

- A. Although the sample was small
- B. Two later surveys
- C. May
- D. A similar pattern

Collocation: the partner word matters

Intended meaning	A suitable expression
Research activity	"The team conducted research."
Inference	"The team drew a conclusion."
Raise an issue	"The result raises a question about the method."
Assign a task	"The teacher gave the students a question."

Use the evidence

Judge the phrase in context: giving a task and raising an issue are different meanings.

Decode dense vocabulary systematically

- 1 **Context** Find the surrounding explanation or contrast.
- 2 **Word parts** Use a prefix or root as a clue, not a guarantee.
- 3 **Grammar** Check the word's role and possible sense in this sentence.
- 4 **Verify** Test the proposed meaning in the whole sentence and consult a suitable reference when needed.

Record terms with a real sentence

Translation only

A translation may help identify meaning.

It does not by itself show the word's partners, grammar or register.

A contextual record

"The students demonstrated the process to the class."

"The students gave a demonstration."
Both are possible: record the complete pattern and intended meaning.

Complex sentences, used deliberately

- 1 **Sentence** “Although the first trial was small, later studies found a similar effect.”
- 2 **Subordinate clause** Acknowledges the first trial’s limitation.
- 3 **Main clause** Reports the later evidence.
- 4 **Check** Does the relationship fit the sources? More clauses alone do not make it more accurate.

The cohesive devices

Device	Complete example
Reference	“The trial was small. It involved one class.”
Substitution	“The first trial failed; the second one succeeded.”
Ellipsis	“One group used notes; the other did not [use notes].”
Connective	“The trial was small, so the conclusion needs caution.”

The however-stuffed paragraph

Addition left implicit

“The sample was small. Moreover, the result may not generalise.”

Moreover signals addition but does not state the proposed reason.

Reason made explicit

“Because the sample was small, the result may not generalise.”

Check sampling method too. The problem is the accuracy of the relationship, not simply the number of connectives.

Synthesis: one argument of your own

Choose the question or idea your paragraph will address.



Compare sources for agreement, difference, qualification or a gap.



Write the relationship and explain what it supports.



Keep source identities traceable and limit the conclusion to their evidence.

The test of synthesis

False test

“If a reader can tell which source supplied each sentence, synthesis has failed.”

This confuses synthesis with obscured attribution. The sources should remain identifiable.

Useful test

What relationship have I explained, and what does it support?

Several separately cited sentences can synthesise. One sentence with three citations can still make an unsupported claim.

Read the complete fictional source pack

Authored extracts — not actual published research

Li (2020), Shade at street sites: “At the sites observed, shaded pavement had lower midday surface temperatures than nearby unshaded pavement.”

Chen (2021), A second set of shaded sites: “At a different set of sites, shaded pavement also had lower midday surface temperatures. We did not measure whole-city average air temperature.”

Wang (2022), Water for planted trees: “Some planted trees needed summer irrigation. We did not measure the total water cost or compare it with the cooling benefit.”

Your turn: synthesise without adding claims

Your turn

Use the supplied Li, Chen and Wang extracts to write two or three sentences. Explain an agreement and a qualification, retain each source identity and name one question the pack cannot answer.

Attempt before advancing. Explain the source relationship and keep its limits explicit.

Worked synthesis from the supplied practice pack

Separate summaries

“Li reports lower shaded-pavement surface temperatures. Chen reports the same. Wang reports irrigation needs.”

This lists source findings but does not explain their relationship.

Agreement plus qualification

“Both reports describe lower midday surface temperatures at shaded sites (Li, 2020; Chen, 2021). Wang (2022) adds irrigation needs for some trees.”

“A proposal should consider both; these extracts establish neither a city-wide temperature change nor an affordable water cost.”

Your turn: spot the synthesis

Your turn

Which statement accurately evaluates synthesis?

- ☐ A. Separate citations always prevent synthesis.
- ☐ B. Only a single sentence with several citations can synthesise.
- ☐ C. Explained source relationships with traceable attribution can synthesise across several sentences.
- ☐ D. Any paragraph with three citations is synthesis.

Citation points to the reference list

- 1 **In-text pointer** “Both reports describe lower surface temperatures (Li, 2020; Chen, 2021).”
- 2 **Practice entry** Li (2020). Shade at street sites. Practice source A.
- 3 **Check** The Li extract concerns observed sites and surface temperature, not city-wide air temperature.
- 4 **Real work** Record actual publication details in the required style. These invented entries are only for this exercise.

One style, used consistently

- 1 **Read the brief** Use the specified referencing style, not a preferred alternative.
- 2 **Keep details** Record the real author, date, title and required publication information.
- 3 **Match** Check citations against entries and claims against the source.
- 4 **Scope** A reference list and an allowed further-reading bibliography may have different rules.

Evaluate a source before citing it

- 1 **Relevance and evidence** Does the source address this question, using a method that supports this claim?
- 2 **Authority** Who wrote it, and what knowledge or evidence do they bring?
- 3 **Date and source type** Is the date suitable? Distinguish original material from an account of it.
- 4 **Limit** Recent and primary do not automatically mean strong. Older or secondary do not automatically mean weak.

Decision

The strength of your citation limits the strength of your claim.

The secondary citation, honestly labelled

Citing a source you have not read

Citing a source you have not read, because another author cited it, is a secondary citation.

Identify the original finding as reported in the source you actually read, using the required style's secondary-citation form.

Presenting it as a directly-read source overstates what you did.

Your turn: the honest trail

Your turn

You cite a 1998 study that you only saw mentioned in a 2024 review. What is required?

- ☐ A. Cite the 1998 study as if you read it
- ☐ B. Cite it as reported in the 2024 review, labelled as a secondary citation
- ☐ C. Cite neither, because you read neither directly
- ☐ D. Cite the review but call it the 1998 study's finding without labels

Check yourself

- Name one claim, its reported evidence and a limit.
- Explain a relationship between the supplied sources.
- Why must synthesis keep source identities traceable?
- How should you label a study encountered only through a review?