

**Strictly
Academic:
A READING AND
WRITING TEXT**

Strictly Academic

A READING AND WRITING TEXT

Pat Currie / Ellen Cray
Carleton University



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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Strictly Academic was written for a very specific audience—first and second language learners who plan to enter academic programs in North America. These students need language training as well as exposure to academic texts and tasks. Regardless of their field of study, students in academic courses face difficult and complex tasks: reading, understanding, and integrating text from a variety of sources, and then selecting, synthesizing, and shaping the necessary information into clear, well-organized text.

As instructors we were troubled that we weren't preparing students adequately for the complexity of academic courses. Often students can't handle the large amount of text required in regular courses. They cannot integrate the material they hear in lectures and read in textbooks in order to write exams and essays. Consequently, *Strictly Academic* has been designed (and class tested) to help students make this difficult transition as they develop their language skills and the strategies necessary for success. The basic approach is to have students perform academic tasks using authentic text. As they work through these reading and writing tasks, which have been broken down into manageable steps, they learn to do them more effectively and efficiently. The content provides the vehicle and motivation for the acquisition of language skills and strategies.

At the university level, students are frequently asked to demonstrate knowledge through writing. The writing activities in *Strictly Academic* are designed to help students develop an independent, productive approach to academic writing. Students should be told that as they write they will not only improve their language skills, but also clarify and consolidate the subject matter. Through writing they will learn much.

As an instructor you may find that some students are puzzled by *Strictly Academic* because it doesn't look like other textbooks they might have used. They may expect their language course to focus on grammar; they may want to write essays about some general topic and then have you correct their errors. Researchers are now telling us that professors care less about perfect language than they do about the content of student writing. We find it helpful to tell students this. We have found that students soon understand that the material here offers them practice in doing what they will be doing in academic courses.

The *Instructor's Manual* accompanying this textbook has a separate section for each thematic chapter. Each section in the manual begins with an

overview of the chapter's contents and proceeds with an explanation of the chapter's activities. We have included the purpose of each activity as well as suggestions for conducting the activities. Answer keys are also provided. Finally, we discuss the rationale behind the pedagogical approach of the text. We feel that both instructors and students are more comfortable using a text if they know its underlying philosophy.

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Pat Currie
Ellen Cray



TO THE STUDENT

If you're using *Strictly Academic*, you probably are planning to enter a college or university, where many new demands will be made on you. You're probably considered an advanced language learner; you now may be able to speak English without difficulty in everyday life. But when you begin a course of study, you'll discover that you need new language and academic skills. Your academic courses will require that you read large amounts of text in books and journals and that you understand what you have read. You'll have to take notes while listening to long lectures, and you may have to participate in seminars and discussion groups. You'll have to write a number of different types of texts, including exams and essays. And this writing won't be easy to do. It will require that you review what you have read and heard, select relevant information, and then arrange this information into clear and concise text. Complex tasks like these require a certain level of language and academic skills.

Strictly Academic is based on the theory that you can develop and practice these skills before you enter a college or university. In order to prepare you for further study, the book's activities match as closely as possible what you'll do in academic classes. All the readings are authentic text; that is, they were written for native speakers of English and have not been changed in any way. The writing tasks, both exam questions and essay topics, are like those you'll be given in academic classes. While using this book you'll be given the opportunity to learn about a wide range of strategies that will be very valuable when you begin course work. We will show you, for example, how to understand what a textbook is about and what the author thinks is important. We will also show you how to predict what information professors will ask for on exams.

We believe that the more you use language, the more language you learn. This book gives you lots of exposure to language; you have to read a lot and you have to discuss what you have read and what you have written with other students and with your teacher. So not only are you developing academic skills, you are also improving your general language ability.

There are eight chapters in this book. Each chapter is devoted to a particular topic, such as dreams or the Nobel Prize. You'll be given several different texts to read and then asked to answer exam questions or write an essay. In other words, each chapter is like a section of an academic course.

One of the most important things you'll learn while using this book is that any academic task can be broken down into a series of steps. You'll discover, for example, that writing an essay involves more than just sitting down and writing. You first must gather your information, plan what you

want to say, and then write several drafts before you are finished. By approaching both reading and writing tasks as a series of steps to be completed, you'll stand a much better chance of completing the tasks successfully.

This book may look different from any other textbook you have used. We realize that at times you may find the material challenging, if not downright difficult. But we feel that if you're willing to spend the time and energy, *Strictly Academic* will help you develop skills that are essential for college and university courses.

Pat Currie
Ellen Cray

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Getting Ready to Write
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Distributing the Handbook

You may find that although you're making progress in learning English, you're still experiencing difficulties in one or two specific areas; for example, you may find that you don't know enough vocabulary or that you're having trouble with pronunciation. Furthermore, your area of difficulty may well be an individual problem with the result that there is less class time spent on it than you might want or need.

In this chapter you will be reading about and talking to good language learners who have overcome problems with English. You'll then write a self-improvement handbook for students who need help with English. The purpose of this handbook is to provide descriptions of techniques that students might find helpful when improving their English.

When working on this handbook, you'll get to practice a number of important language skills. First you'll learn how to skim text in order to locate important information. You'll also discover where