

# ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

Now that you know about egocentric bias you are better positioned to overcome it. Try some of these tips:

- ☀ For essays, have someone else read your work and provide comments. If your friend, parent, or classmate is confused by your writing your professor likely will be too.
- ☀ Read your own work slowly and aloud. This will put you in a better position to assess clarity and catch problems.
- ☀ When reading your work try to adopt the perspective of another reader. This other person hasn't read what you've read, hasn't looked at your notes, and doesn't know what you are thinking. Given that, is what you've written truly clear on its own?
- ☀ Answers that you write on tests shouldn't need further clarification from you to understand. Practice writing clear and detailed answers when you study and seek feedback from your professor or TA.
- ☀ **Bonus Adjustment:**  
Make your writing easier to read by replacing complex terms with simpler ones. For example, instead of 'psychology' use 'thinky science' and instead of 'electromagnetism' use 'magic pully-pushy power.'

# STAY CONNECTED



PSYCHTOOLS FOR SCHOOL

To access other **Psychtools for School** resources please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/hbw7zff>

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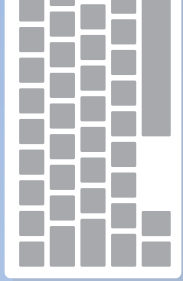
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Egocentric Bias:  
A Challenge to Writing Clearly

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## SITUATION

Alfonso has noticed a pattern in the feedback he receives from professors. They note that his essays are not clear and that, on tests, his answers are not detailed enough. Alfonso finds this confusing because when he reads his work, he knows exactly what he means. Moreover, the professors were the ones who put all this information in Alfonso's head so if anyone should understand it, it's them, right? So, why do his professors struggle to understand his writing?



## PSYCHOLOGY CAN EXPLAIN THAT

As the author of your words, you have access to all the thoughts that inspired them, including how one point links to another. You may forget that your readers are not privy to that information and that they are completely restricted to the words written on the page (even when defecated is written instead of defeated!). This tendency to rely on your own point of view is known as egocentric bias.

Realizing that you have written something incomprehensible doesn't feel good. In fact, it feels bad! It may be easier for you to believe that your writing is fine instead of the possibility that you were unclear or wrong. However, being successful in school will in part depend on accepting feedback about your work and learning to communicate clearly. Remember that time in grade 8 when you cut your own bangs? I bet that feedback wasn't pleasant, but it was important!

## CONSEQUENCES

Understanding egocentric bias is important because it could interfere with your ability to communicate clearly. For example:

- ☀ You may overestimate your ability to communicate successfully.
- ☀ You may wrongly assume that your writing is clear just because you understand it.
- ☀ You may downplay the feedback of others instead of using it to improve.
- ☀ Outside of academics, you may assume that all your stories are hilarious.



EGOCENTRIC BIAS IS A TENDENCY TO VIEW THINGS FROM OUR OWN POINT OF VIEW, BUT TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY YOU NEED TO APPRECIATE THE PERSPECTIVE OF ANOTHER. TAKE FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS SERIOUSLY AND DON'T ASSUME YOUR READER WILL KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN JUST BECAUSE YOU DO.

