Writing the literature review

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Contents

Purpose

The purpose of this book is to help you write your next literature review. This is true whether you are crafting one for an undergraduate midterm paper, a doctoral dissertation, or working on your first manuscript for a peer review publication. For years, as professors we have read the best and worst of what students have written in our classes. We have witnessed in a handful of instances, undergraduate writers write more masterfully than doctoral students. We have witnessed doctoral students write first year papers which were ready for publication. And of course, the opposite is true. This begs, the question – what makes a student a good writing. Our hope is to answer that question in our textbook designed for you the student. Good writing comes down to practice, but having a guiding framework will be helpful as you begin your next paper.

This book serves as a guide for how literature reviews are written in upper-level business courses, but the core advice and direction applies to most other disciplines. We organize the book into several sections designed to walk with you every step of the way as you write your next literature review. Importantly, we begin by describing the purpose of the literature review, and provide its use in the greater historical context of the scientific process. Second, we provide a guide on how to conduct the literature review itself, followed by detailed dissections of two types of literature reviews.

Finally, we close with how to improve your command of academic writing and practical tips on how to evolve into a more complete writer.

Preface

Our pistenbully plodded along a snow bank on the fringe of the frozen Ross Sea, a vector 5 miles due west of McMurdo Station, Antarctica. We were transporting a two-man dive crew who were tasked that day with collecting specimens under the sea ice. To my right, I spied saw a lone Adéle penguin, running up a snow-covered terrace. Flippers out wide, flailing, it reminded me of a two-year old child running with abandon from his mother in the supermarket. At the crest of the hill, the penguin flopped onto its belly and slid 20 feet to the bottom, where it awkwardly stood up and began to flail up the next hill. We continued along for another 30 minutes. No talking. It wasn't possible because the noise of the tracked vehicle required us to keep ear plugs in, while the glare of the sun off the snow-covered ocean required us to keep our goggles on. Standard procedure was to fall asleep any time you had to ride more than 20 minutes.

We stepped out of the vehicle, but left it running. You never turn off a vehicle when off-base in Antarctica. It could be fatal if you couldn't get it started again. Besides, the US government pays the gas bill to let it idle. We pulled our fur-lined, government issue red parka hoods over our stocking hats to combat the wind and marched through the snow in our rubber bunny boots towards the ice shelter which was sat upon the frozen sea. Once inside we lit the propane heater and gathered round the three-foot wide ice hole the staff had augured at the beginning of the season. The sea ice was 10 feet thick in this section, relatively shallow by Antarctic standards. My job was to help the divers gear up. First the dry suit, then the ninja turtle gloves, then the O2 tanks. Finally, a couple of jabs at the thin layer of ice on the hole, and wait a few minutes before "pushing them in". Fighting ocean current posed the biggest threat to our divers, but a close second was the leopard seal. Any activity at the hole might draw their attention and attract them from their underwater hunting expeditions. By happenstance, they sometimes use the dive hole to come up for oxygen. We had to make sure there weren't any in the area. We helped the divers into the water and most of our job was done for the day so we huddled around the propane heater and waited. Under the water, the divers worked quickly to collect specimens requested by the cadre of scientists waiting back on station. I think today was supposed to be starfish. A professor on sabbatical from Vanderbilt was investigating reproductive rates in Antarctic waters.

I begin to wonder – how did we get here? Not me and the team to the ice shanty, but rather, how did we as a country, as a collection of nations, get to the point where billions of dollars are spent on scientific discovery and investigation in Antarctica? And why the hell does it matter why fish's blood doesn't freeze in sub-freezing temps, or what ice cores drilled from 100 feet deep into a glacier can tell us about snowfall a half a million years ago? The naïve, twenty-five-year-old me asked that question. The academic me sees the reality that getting to this point in our modern age of knowledge could not have been achieved alone. Others will come after us. We have the luxury of more than 500 years of scientific discovery, empirical investigation, and philosophical theorizing that has happened since the Renaissance. If we are studying reproduction rates of starfish, it is only because someone before us first discovered differences in species, and explored what cells were, or how reproduction in echinoderms transpires. And then some brilliant scholar discovers how reproductive rates is a symptomic metric of ocean health which has implications for all oceans and all people whose lives are impacted by the sea.

This cannot be achieved in one lifetime. It takes decades and centuries to formulate the critical mass needed in each field to make lasting advancements. The exponent required to describe how much knowledge has been created in the last half-millennium is staggering. We thought the earth was flat, we thought flies auto-generated from meat, and how many folk tales and superstitions have we debunked in that time with solid scientific inquiry into previously un-explained phenomenon? Even at the earliest stages of the Age of Enlightenment, the greatest thinkers of the time knew that they could not advance the understanding of the modern world by themselves. That is why we were there.

Robert Lloyd
US Antarctic Program 2005

CHAPTER 1

Standing on the shoulders of giants

In 1675, Isaac Newton penned a letter to his professional rival and fellow scholar Robert Hooke. This missive contained perhaps Newton's most famous quote "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." This phrase was a both a tip of his hat to his primary contemporary competitor as well as a recognition that Newton's own work was founded on the discoveries and ingeniousness of his predecessors. Hooke has been characterized as the most important experimental scientist of all time, and developed many of the scientific methods used today.

As a physicist, Newton had drawn upon his contemporaries at the Royal Society of London as well as the astronomists, philosophers, mathematicians, physicists, and alchemists who had come before him. His letter was both a reconciliation after years of rivalry, as well as humility in light of his discoveries. Newton knew that he could not make the breakthroughs that he did without the baseline establishments made by others.

Even though Newton gets credit for the quotation, it can originally be traced to the French philosopher Bernard de Chartres, who stated “we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their size.” (Chen, 2003, p. 135). Perhaps Newton gets the credit for this quote because his scientific successes were lasting, and in the subsequent centuries, many others built their extensions and advancements of his work in a way philosophy simply could not.

The “shoulder of giants” metaphor is perhaps the most used turn-of-phrase in modern academic article titles. Modern scholars understand the importance of the development of new knowledge and the process of understanding the modern world in light of the old, particularly since the Age of Enlightenment. They tip their hat, as did Newton.

> “The history of science is a history of collective, or shared, learning. Historians piece together the way knowledge and ideas spread from one scientist to another. The story of these many connections crosses centuries and continents.”-Eman Elshaikh

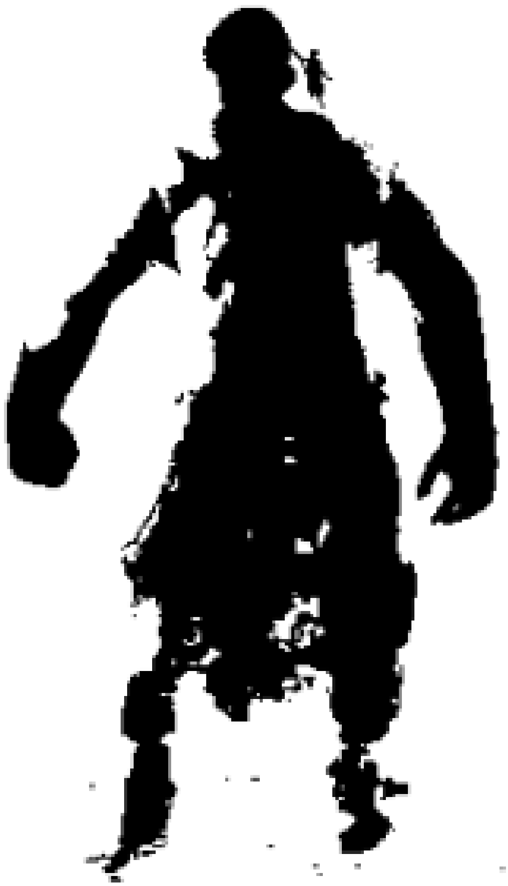
What we study as the scientific collective of society will be expanded and improved upon. However, to do this, future scientists have to recognize the knowledge which underwrites their progress.

Let’s follow the development of nuclear energy as an example.
In 450 BC Greek philosophy Democritus hypothesized the idea of the atom. In 1800, Dalton found evidence of atoms. Chadwick discovered the neuron in 1932 and in the same year, Cockcroft and Walton split the first nucleus. Nuclear fission was observed in 1938 by Hahne and Meitner, and shortly thereafter, the first atomic bomb was produced in the Manhattan Project. Since that time, we have applied nuclear energy to produce electricity, to power submarines and aircraft carriers, and to treat cancer. None of this happens without a single one of the cascading discoveries prior thereto. Technological advancement begets discovery which begets additional progress. This process of diffusion of technology and scientific discovery is also the method of developing academic

theory. Although not as important as nuclear energy use, small theories in management or sociology create foundations for bigger ones and their impact on the specific discipline being studied is profound no-less.

For example, contemporary leadership theories are based on a century long development of leadership theories. Early debates on leadership focused on whether leaders were born or made (Great Man Theory), followed by an exhaustive investigation during the 1950s on which personal traits characterized leaders (Trait Theory). Later scholars focused on task, process, service, and transformation. Contemporary leadership theories such as leader-member exchange (LMX Theory) have been crafted from the lessons and mistakes of previous understandings of leadership.

The purpose of this book is to give you a framework for building on previous knowledge. The literature review is nothing more than describing which giants' shoulders you are standing on, and if done well, a chance for you to provide a platform for future scholars to stand upon. You become the giant, if your research is worthy of that honor. This book is imbued with the practical application in mind. Be you a graduate student, or early academic, this book will give you a framework and understanding of how to conduct a literature review. We begin by describing the purpose of a literature review, what it contains, and then we provide acceptable methods for conducting a literature review. Finally, we provide guidance on how to improve your writing through use of academic language.



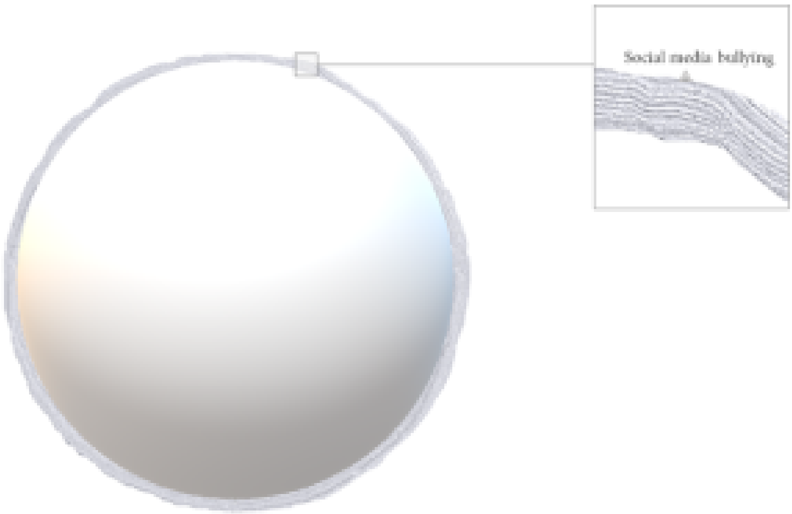
CHAPTER 2

The purpose of a literature review

Simply put, the purpose of a literature review is to recognize and track the previous knowledge upon which research is built. In the thousands of years that humans have been observing their surroundings and making discoveries, we have collectively built a sizeable body of knowledge. *Homo erectus* (purportedly) created the first controlled fire. Likely this happened by observing the aftermaths of lightning strikes, and then discovering the result of friction between organic matter, or experimenting with colliding various rocks together. They certainly did not have the organized process we have today for expanding the body of knowledge, but they made a momentous contribution no less – controlled fire allowed for a considerable list of other possibilities within civilization (forging weapons, cooking, etc). Today we don't typically stumble upon discoveries like early civilization. Instead we use the scientific method, controlled experiments, or logically constructed theories from previous observations to continue expanding the body of knowledge at a rapidly cumulative rate.

The body of knowledge is "the complete set of concepts, terms and activities that make up a professional domain, as defined by the relevant learned society or professional association" (Oliver, 2012, p. 3). In short, its what we know about any discipline. When taken collectively, the body of knowledge is everything the scientific community knows about the world. Some areas of the body of knowledge are well developed, and others are simply beginning. We know a lot more about mathematics and chemistry than we do for example behavioral economics, or mental illness. Yet, everything together represents an important platform from which to expand the body of knowledge.

A good analogy for this body of knowledge is a sphere. At any given point in time this sphere contains everything the world knows about all disciplines. As more studies are conducted and science advances, the sphere expands. In most disciplines the expansion is a small, incremental bump. For example, if you conducted a study on the "impact of social media bullying on middle school students' mental health," the results of that study would create a small bump on the body of knowledge. Conversely, in cases where ground breaking research fundamentally changes humankind or understanding of the universe, the bump would protrude substantially. Nobel prizes are given out for these types of advances; such is the case in physics, medicine, and economics. Think discovery of the radio wave, or contributions to organ transplant science, or Keynesian economics. Therefore, this sphere which represents the body of knowledge is not perfectly smooth, but rather bumpy and perhaps organically lopsided at times as disciplines advance at different rates. For this reason, it's less like a pool ball or balloon, and more like an orange with all of its imperfections, organic surface bumps, and small craters.



Adding a bump

The “literature review” stems from the scientific method, which is the standard process by which we learn about our world. The scientific method has five basic steps: define the question to investigate, make predictions, gather data, observe, draw conclusions. This basic framework is taught to fifth graders working on a project for the science fair, and utilized alike by scientists conducting studies on nano-particle acceleration. The first step is the most crucial in expanding the body of knowledge because we cannot make predictions in fields too advanced for our thinking, or upon those which we have almost no understanding. In the sphere analogy, this would be tantamount to creating a new circle or bump which lies in space, not connected to the existing mass. Imagine Da Vinci trying to grasp helicopter avionics with his 15th century crude design of the helicopter, or Edison delving into laser research immediately after discovering artificial light creation. These connections wouldn’t happen because the human mind is limited in conceiving of advancements too far removed from their existing reality. Advancement takes time for societies and academic communities to digest, and scientists need time to ruminate on new possibilities.

The sphere analogy allows us to visualize this progress of science, discovery, and knowledge creation. Solid, acceptable research must be built on the existing, contemporary understanding of the world. In fact, the scientific community values the scientific method so much that it would reject findings of a research study if the scholar does not recognize previous developments and describe how the research expands the body of knowledge. This acknowledgement is the purpose of the literature review. The literature review helps us see where on the body of knowledge we are making our bump.

Two kinds of Literature Review

The “literature review” is often a source of frustration and confusion for many masters and doctoral students. They usually have two questions – what is the literature, and what is a literature review? The answer to the first question is simple. The literature (sometimes called the academic literature) is the written findings from all of the studies ever conducted and written about. In modern academia and scientific community, this comes in the form of peer-reviewed research articles published in journals. Peer reviewed means that after completing a research study, the scholar (or scientist) describes the study using whichever variation of the scientific method used in the research. This first draft, called a manuscript at this stage, is sent to other scholars in that field. These peers have one role – to validate, critique, and ultimately accept or reject the study that was conducted. For this reason, the process is called peer-reviewed research. The feedback on the manuscript given to the scholar allows them to revise and fix any issues. Once the final draft is accepted, the manuscript becomes a published article in a “peer-reviewed” journal, and hence a part of the accepted literature. The idea behind peer review is that experts in the field will look at existing knowledge, and determine if in fact the research study was successful in advancing the body of knowledge. This means that magazine articles, news outlets, blogs, online content such as Wikipedia and the like are not considered valid sources of information for the systematic way we advance scientific knowledge. Although, important to note is that some disciplines will accept books or book chapters as valid scientific output, especially if its peer-reviewed.

The literature review plays an important role in this process because it establishes the baseline and foundation for the research. Even if you are writing papers for a class and not submitting to a peer-reviewed journal, the same process and discipline should be followed. The second question that students ask – (what is a literature review?) – requires a more nuanced response. There are two principle types of literature reviews. The first type of literature review is a section of a research paper and functions much as described in the "standing on the shoulder of giants" analogy. It's the part of the research that justifies how the project advances existing knowledge. The second type of literature review is an article unto itself. There is a slightly different purpose in the latter as it entails more synthesis of contemporary research, and provides a more explicit exhortation on future research direction of the field. We will describe both of these approaches and provide examples in the subsequent chapters.

The literature review as a section of a research project

The structure of a research project stems from the scientific method and most commonly entails the introduction, literature review, method, results, and discussion sections. The *Introduction* describes the importance of the study, provides context, and tells the community why this particular phenomenon should be studied. This is the sales pitch of the article and the part that compels others to continue reading. The ***Literature Review*** traces the roots of the theory or knowledge the project is attempting to advance. In the ***Method*** section, the exact process is described so that peers can either replicate the study in future attempts, or can critique the robustness or validity of the research (by means of the peer-review process). The ***Results*** section is usually the shortest part of a paper in that it simply reports the outcome. In quantitative studies there are recorded metrics and statistics that show the outcome of the experiment or analysis. In qualitative studies, the themes or key understandings are identified. The ***Discussion*** section brings everything to a point by articulating how the study did what it set out to do, and how it advances the particular theory or research train that it intended to. This section also outlines any limitations of the study (size or scope, for example), as well as maps out a logical future research agenda for peer-scholars to follow.

Literature reviews which are section of a scientific study serve the primary purpose of mapping the roots of the study, and then choosing a specific theory upon which the project is based. Let's go back to our social media bullying example. If we were to conduct a study on social media bullying in schools we might first acknowledge Social Cognition Theory (how individuals learn from each other), as well as the Theory of Planned Behavior (how we act on our intentions), as well as any studies that investigated the impact of bullying not in the online environment but in the physical realm. The literature review can be constructed using a chronological approach (start with the first theory you are referencing and concluding with more recent trends) or a thematic approach (put the studies you are citing into themes and describe those themes). It most cases it's important to acknowledge those giants we talked about. Studies which identified ground breaking theory that compel many scholars after them to use as the basis of their work are called "seminal works." Good examples of this are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs or Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (sometimes these seminal authors are called the Godfather of their discipline). Using the sphere analogy, the roots to our social media bullying study might look something like this.

We are using the sphere diagram here to improve your ability to visualize how literature reviews are constructed. When writing the literature review, the task is to provide a logical flow of theories and historical progression of understanding within the field. In some cases, scholars create similar visualizations to show the reader this flow. Most importantly with the literature review here is to make the case for why the theory you have chosen is relevant and most appropriate. Additionally, the literature review provides justification for the study in that it demonstrates where research is needed to "fill in the gap."

Take this excerpt from Helens-Hart, et. al, (2022) for example. They begin their literature review section on reality TV with this qualifying statement:

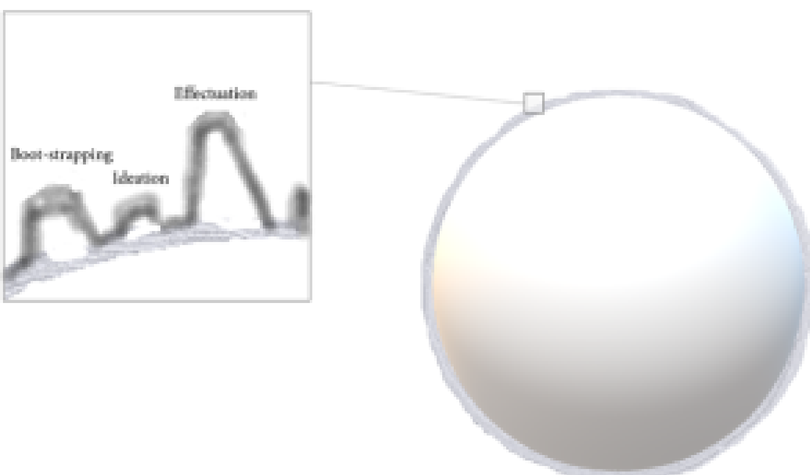
> "In this section, we present an overview of research on reality television programming (RTP), Undercover Boss, and organizational dissent. Through this discussion, we show how our work is situated within the larger research context and justify the need for continued research." (p. 3).

Of final note on this type of literature review is that it's important to recognize inconsistencies in the history of the literature. Point blank, sometimes scientists or scholars get it wrong. No reasonable psychologist today would use Freud's theory of sexualized behavior to diagnose modern problems. Although contemporary psychologist find fault and cast doubt regarding the relevancy of his theories, a literature review on behavior or sexuality might trace theory back to its seminal work, in this case Freud. Second, sometimes the findings of studies disagree with other scholars' findings. This disagreement is acceptable, and certainly significant to report in a literature review. For example, some research in human resources report that discrimination is a primary driver a gender pay gap, while others found that factors "other than discrimination" explain the difference in wages between men and women. These disagreements are often fertile ground for new studies as scientists seek to settle the score. The literature review needs to include these debates and discussions.

One well known example of this was on global culture studies. A prominent scholar Hofstede made a case for a set of common elements that constituted culture. Javidan and House found a different set of elements, and these scholars went back and forth in the literature making their case. Smith (2006) wrote an article which provided insightful commentary on this debate, and based his article title on an old African proverb – *When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled*. This third commentary on the original debate provided key direction and distinctions on the academic conversation moving forward.

The literature review as a stand-alone paper

The literature review as a stand-alone paper serves a slightly different purpose. As opposed to the literature review which serves as the grounding and mapping element of a peer reviewed academic article, the purpose of a stand-alone literature review article is to synthesize the most recent findings of a field, and to provide a roadmap for future direction of research. Tracing the roots, seminal works, and historical progression of a field is still important. However, when the literature review gets to recent discoveries, the two-fold purpose become apparent – identify modern themes which have not been summarized and provide a map for future direction. Let us return to the sphere analogy, noting that discoveries in a given field expand the body of knowledge, creating the bump on the outside of the field. What happens in fields which develop rapidly (meaning, a lot of articles are being published, new discoveries are being made, etc.) is that these bumps grow and grow, building upon each other in single trains of thought and development, becoming more like stalactites, and less like minor bumps on the surface of the body of knowledge. Alternatively, a field might be developing new ideas which are varied and diverse – not necessarily building upon each other, but rather exploring new themes which increase the breadth of the field, but not much depth – more analogous to skin acne on the surface of the sphere. In each of these cases, a scholar might review all of the new articles in a field and provide commentary on which themes go together, which topics within the field are gaining momentum, synthesize related concepts within the growing field, or even demonstrate how the advancements in a field are creating a completely new field unto itself. Let's use the example of entrepreneurship. Much of the early academic literature on entrepreneurship (1980s) focused on what characteristics make an entrepreneur. These early scholars were defining the term and which activities constituted entrepreneurship. More recent literature on entrepreneurship has focused on the nuanced "process" of entrepreneurship. As these different steps in the process of entrepreneurship become developed, and build upon each other, a need becomes apparent for a scholar to summarize and synthesize what is happening in our discovery of the field. It might look something like this:



Literature on entrepreneurship, for example, has recently focused on themes such as boot-strapping (early stages of entrepreneurship whereby the entrepreneur works on thin margins, high potential, long-term payout opportunities), ideation (how entrepreneurs get new ideas for entrepreneurial endeavors), and effectuation (how do ideas get turned into actual entrepreneurial ventures). As these individual tracks grow, a scholar might recognize the need for a literature review to show how these themes are related and contextualize these concepts within the entrepreneurship field. Even though each of these areas are growing on themselves, they are inter-related and represent elements of a common theme of entrepreneurial process. By providing a literature review which brings several of these individual tracks together, the tracks become one (entrepreneurial process), and not the individual spikes, but rather a larger lump on the body of knowledge (remember we said the sphere isn't perfectly circular as various fields develop at different paces).

The second phase of a literature review in a stand-alone paper is to provide a roadmap for future direction of the field. Several themes or related tracks might be identified in this literature review, and it's the job of the scholar to provide commentary on what future research in the field needs to focus on. This could be anticipation or prediction of where the field will likely go, or where the field should focus its investigation, based on social, economic, or political need. For example, some entrepreneurial scholars are focusing on entrepreneurial mindset to determine if it can be taught and used as a means from economic struggle. Other scholars are using entrepreneurial process to solve social problems such as pollution, sustainability, or conservation. Some scholars are working to discover how we can better serve and support subsistence entrepreneurs (someone who is an entrepreneur not by choice but necessity, like a street vendor or shop owner in a developing country). The stand-alone literature review gives scholars shoulders to stand on after notching the themes and summarizing the progress in the field.

CHAPTER 3

How to conduct the literature review

Choose and narrow your topic.

The first step in writing a literature review is to determine the purpose of your literature review. Are you writing an undergraduate paper, a thesis, a dissertation, or a manuscript for publication. Understanding this will give you both parameters and a general goal to work towards – how long, how in depth do I need to review, how far back in history should I begin my review, etc. The assignment or task given to you will determine the scope of your project and the time you need to spend on it. This scope will also give you a narrow focus on a topic and hence make the project more manageable. For example, research emotional intelligence as a literature review topic is far too broad, even for the most rigorous assignment such as a manuscript for publication. Rather, the context of emotional intelligence as it relates to organizational outcomes (that is, what benefits come to managers who utilize emotional intelligence well?), this becomes a more realistic project. If you need ideas on which topic to write about, you can ask your peers which ideas they have discarded or currently considering. Ask your professor which topics are most relevant to your level of study. If you are looking for a dissertation topic, ask a practitioner which problems or challenges they are dealing with. If you are an academic researcher, look for articles that make claims such as “this topic lacks a unifying theme” or a field where scholars are disagreeing with each other regularly on a single topic. These sorts of debates in the literature are fertile areas for literature reviews to summarize latest findings.

Search the literature

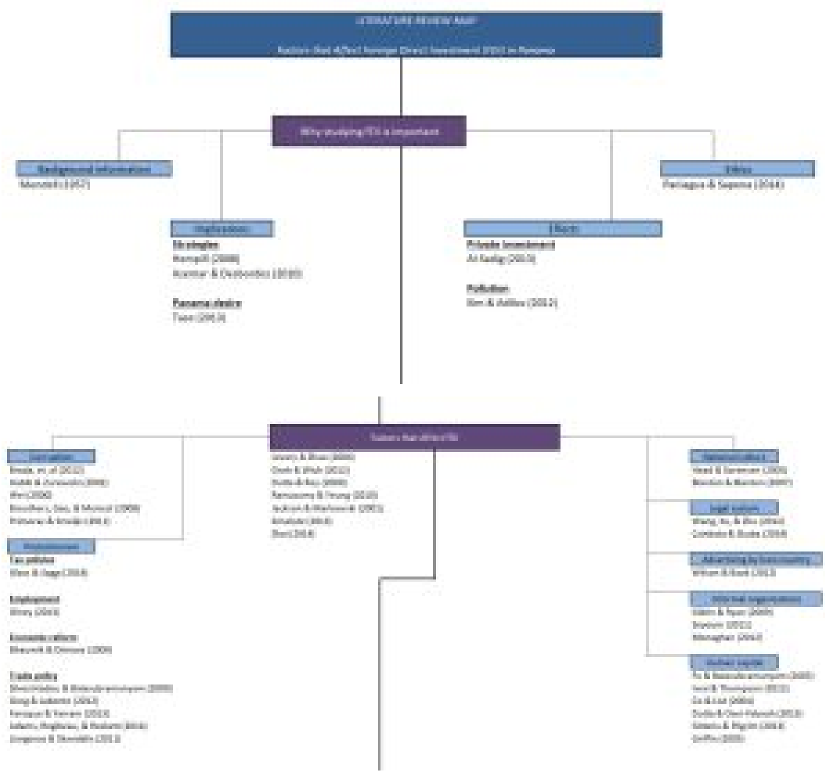
Once you have narrowed the topic to a singular focus, you need to employ a database or search engine to find articles relevant to your topic. Remember, we are only looking for the peer-reviewed articles for your literature review. You should not be gleaning blogs, Wikipedia, business press, news websites, etc. for information. Rather, you should consider starting with google scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, ERIC, or your local university or public library database. Many libraries still contain volumes and volumes of academic journals in hard copy format before most of the journals went completely online. When you search these

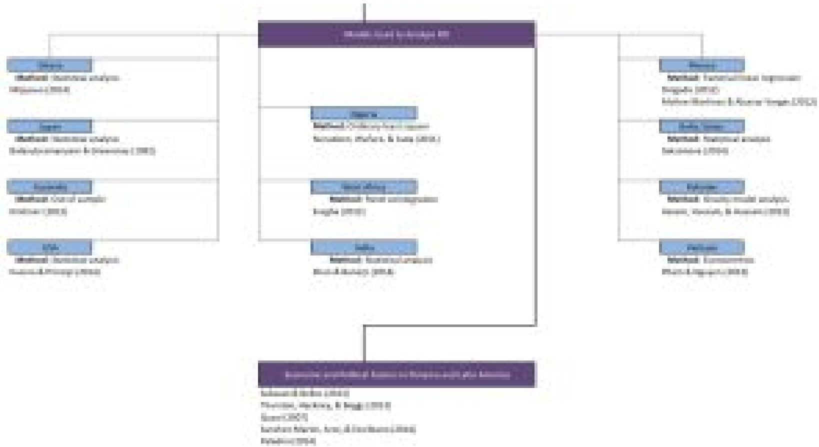
databases you will need to choose a handful of keywords or main ideas to search. This should give you an adequate starting point for articles. You should then consider synonyms or related concepts to serve as keywords as well. Once you start learning about the subject, you might see various names for the same concept or idea. For example, Corporate Social Responsibility is also referred to as stakeholder theory, sustainability, triple bottom line, sustainable development creating shared value, corporate citizenship, and simply – social responsibility. Understanding the various names and synonyms comes with more searches and familiarity with the topic. The more advanced you get in your research role, the more familiar you will become with the literature.

A second source of good articles for a literature review is in previous literature reviews. Literature reviews are snapshots in time, and scholars regularly summarize the field or current state of the research field. Some fields advance faster than others and require more frequent literature reviews. These outdated literature reviews are great starting places to identify previous themes, seminal authors, and contributors to the research. Keep in mind these are only starting places. If the last literature review was conducted 10 years prior, there are 10 years of development that also need to be reviewed and included in your project. However, use the previous literature reviews to find good articles. Then you can search specifically for those articles either directly at the publisher's website, library database, or google scholar.

Selection and evaluation of articles

In your search, let's suppose you found 40 articles that are clearly related to your research topic, and another 10 articles that you think are related but not quite sure. At this point you will now dive into the articles themselves. Start by saving all of the articles in pdf format and putting them in one place on your computer. Some scholars and students will print out the articles at this point as an alternative. The good news is that at this step, you do not need to read every single article. Rather, you should go through each article's abstract and make a note of the key takeaway or thesis of the article. Most articles have abstracts which are free to access and many of them will come with keywords associated with them to help you search them. Literature reviews can be conducted as either chronological, or thematic. As you begin to take notes, you can decide which of these two approaches make the most sense. If the field developed slowly over a long period of time, it might make sense to approach it chronologically. If the field developed quickly, or advances were made more recently, you might consider organizing your literature review into themes, instead of following it as a historical progression. At this point you should be looking for patterns, important trends, and influential theories. If you printed off the articles, you can put them in piles with post-it notes that describe the themes of each. If you downloaded the pdf, you can create subfolders with the themes and place the articles in each of these folders. Whether you chose chronological or thematic, you should then map out the ideas and categories of the articles you found.





Begin writing

You can begin by creating a draft of the literature review using the literature review map that you have created. If you are writing a stand-alone literature review, you can begin by writing the introduction. Provide background information and argue for the relevance or timeliness of your literature review. Then provide some transition for the thesis statement and provide a clear picture of what your literature review will entail and what the reader can expect. If you are writing the literature review as part of a section of a paper, then you can do a condensed version of the introduction, and include it in the section of the literature review. You still need to argue for the relevance of the literature review, but you also need to describe how your research project will add to the research field you are describing in your literature review. Write the content of the literature review based on your chronological or thematic choice. For articles that are more relevant, you should describe in detail. For more ancillary contributions such as contextual applications of your concept, you can summarize in briefer descriptions, or a more summarized approach. The purpose of the assignment (remember step 1) will determine how in depth you need to go into the literature for your review. For the content, you don't need to cover every single article. Instead, rely on the patterns and themes to describe what researchers have found. If you find 10 articles with the exact findings, you don't need to cite all of them, but you can make statements in your content that the articles you are citing are not the only ones which made this finding. The conclusion should be a focus on either direction for future research (for a stand alone paper), or how your research project advances the field of knowledge (for a literature review as a section of a paper).

Templates to follow

The stand alone research paper as an academic paper might use the following outline:

- 1) **Introduction** – describe the topic, its relevance, and timeliness. Why is a literature review needed at this point in the literature. Describe for the reader a high level summary of what has been found to-date without going into too much detail. Remember the purpose of the literature review is to describe the giants shoulders, and why this is a jumping off point for the next decade of research. Use the introduction as an argument for how your paper does both of these. Your paper should have a thesis statement that guides the reader through the rest of the paper.
- 2) **Themes –** The core of a literature review is the findings of the research articles that you found. The thematic approach would result in several sections, and sub sections of the themes.
- 3) **Conclusion –** The conclusion is the author's chance to give future scholars a light to follow. Not only does the writer need to provide future direction of research, but that future direction needs to be justified. Does learning more about a subject allow us to better apply it, will it

save lives, or money, or time, or create a deeper understanding for altruistic purposes? Will researching the topic advance new fields or compliment related ones? Will researching the topic re-affirm a shaky understanding of the field, and thereby creating more solid ground upon which to stand for future research?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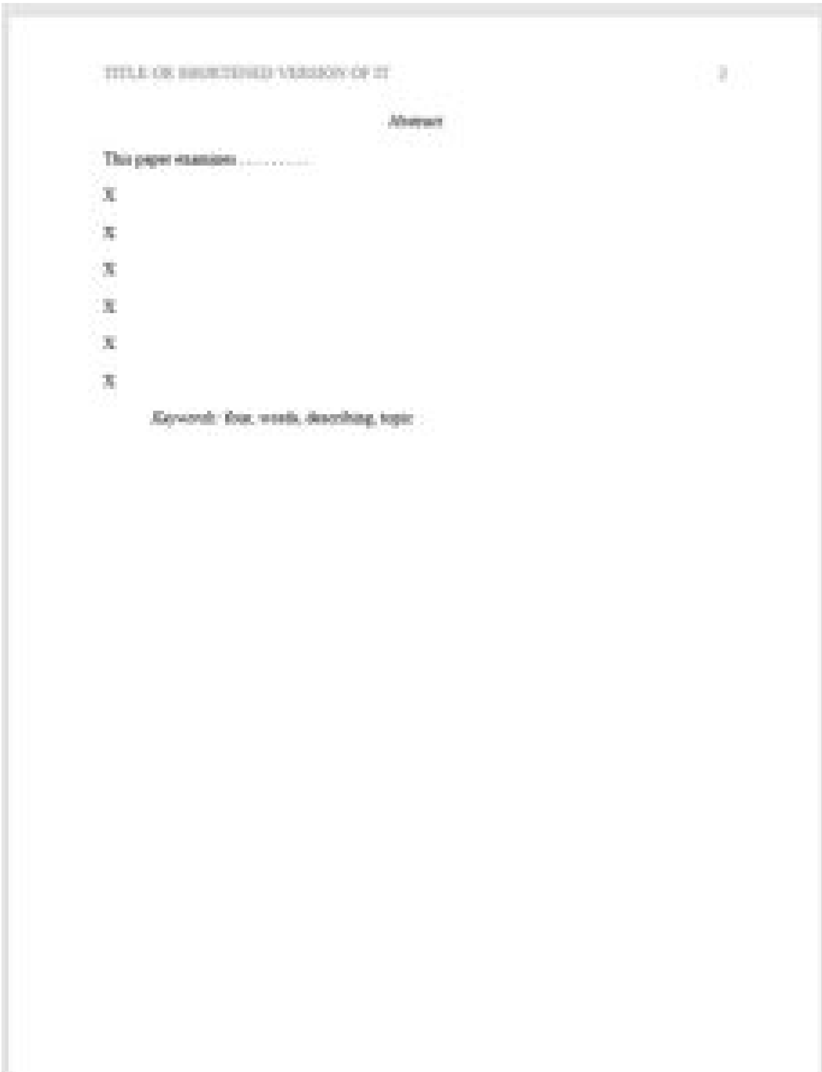
Title of Your Paper Goes Here

Your Name

University Affiliation


TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT 2

Abstract

This paper examines ……….

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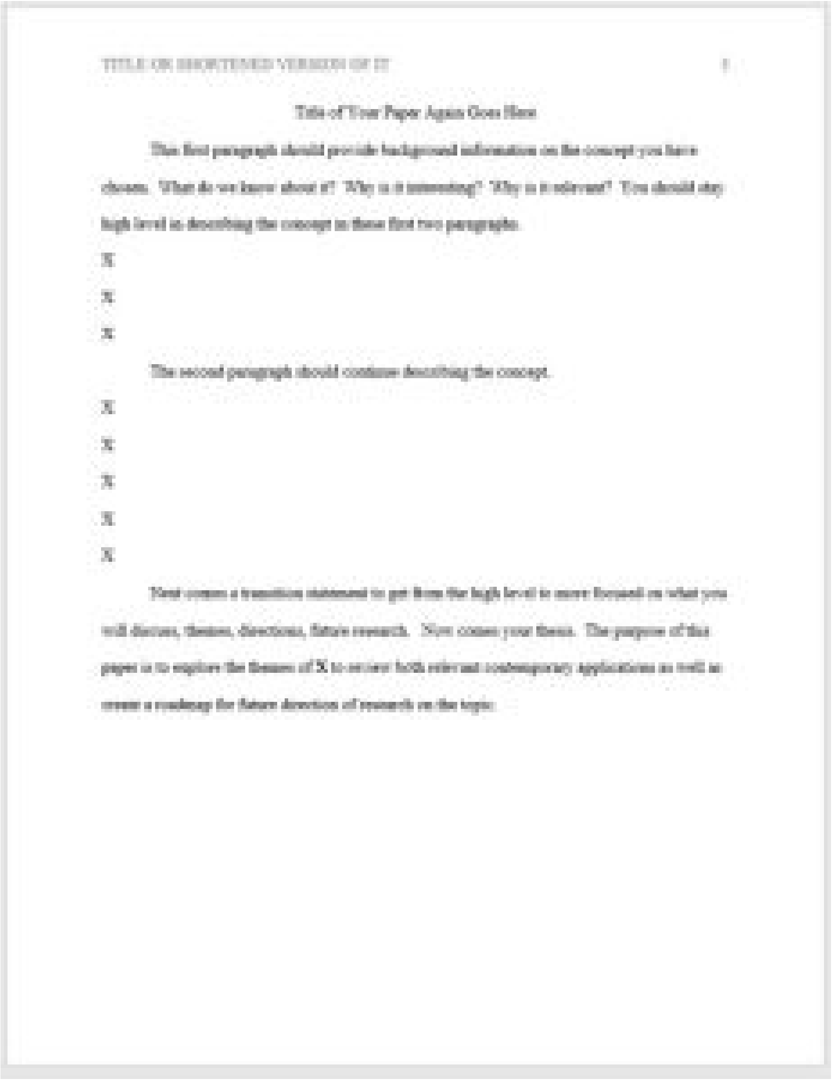
Keywords: four, words, describing, topic



TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT 1

Title of Your Paper Again Goes Here

This first paragraph should provide background information on the concept you have chosen. What do we know about it? Why is it interesting? Why is it relevant? You should stay high level in describing the concept in these first two paragraphs.

X

X

X

The second paragraph should continue describing the concept.

X

X

X

X

X

Next comes a transition statement to get from the high level to more focused on what you will discuss, themes, directions, future research. Now comes your thesis. The purpose of this paper is to explore the themes of X to review both relevant contemporary applications as well as create a roadmap for the future direction of research on the topic.

TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT 4

Theme #1

Now you should describe the article or articles that you found that describe the first theme of your concept.

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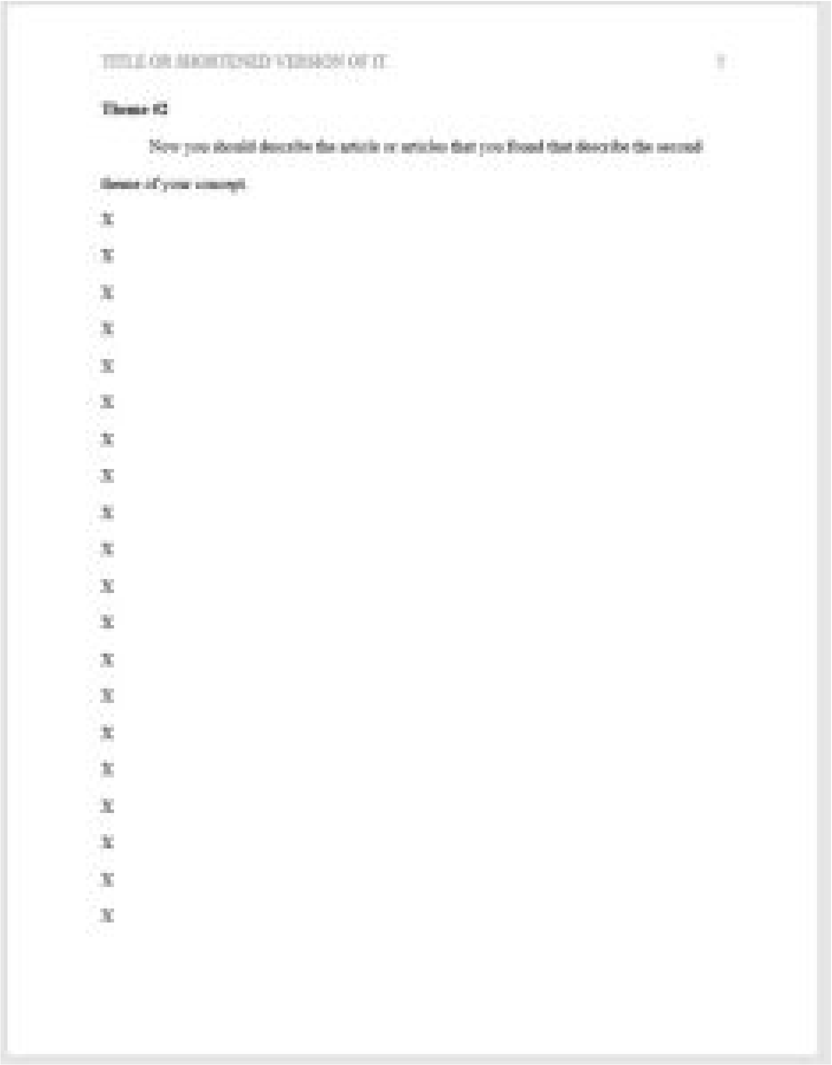
TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT

Theme #2

Now you should describe the article or articles that you found that describe the second theme of your concept.

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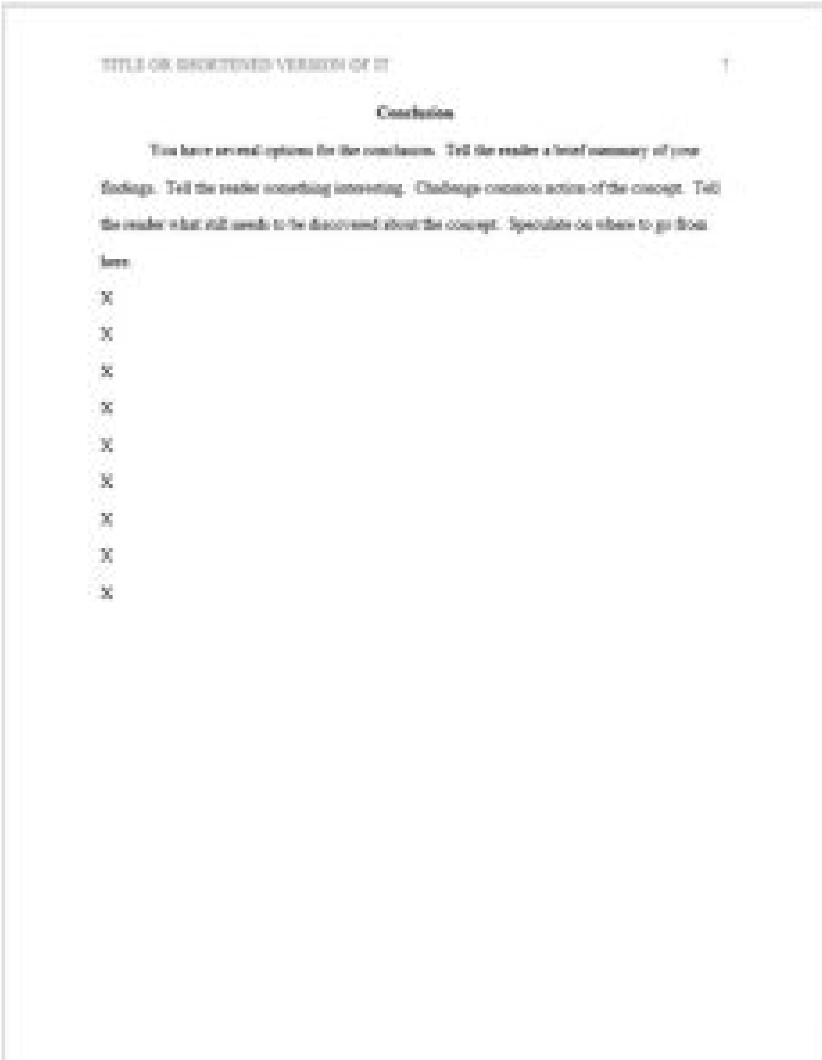
TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT 6

Theme #3

Now you should describe the article or articles that you found that describe the third theme of your concept.



TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT 7

Conclusion

You have several options for the conclusion. Tell the reader a brief summary of your findings. Tell the reader something interesting. Challenge common notion of the concept. Tell the reader what still needs to be discovered about the concept. Speculate on where to go from here.

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TITLE OR SHORTENED VERSION OF IT

References

Last Name, First Initial. (Year). Article title in lower case except first word and proper nouns. *Title of Journal, Volume*(Issue), page numbers.

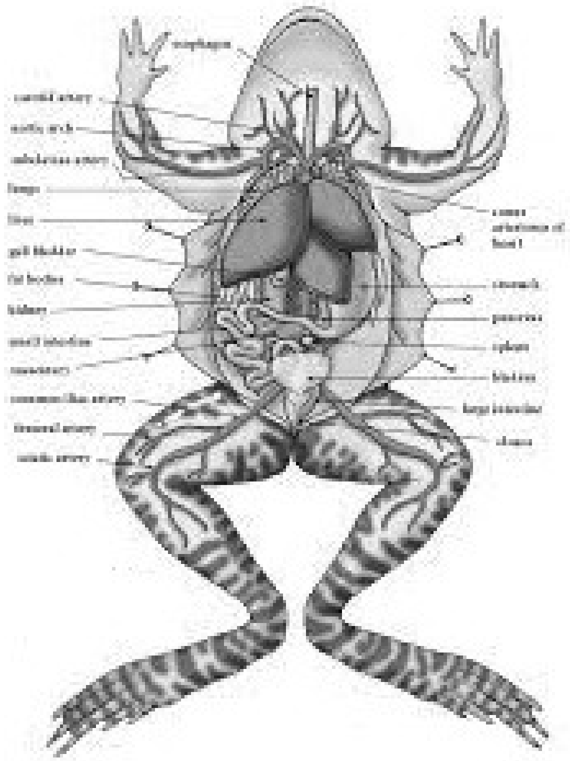
Last Name, First Initial., Last Name, First Initial., & Last Name, First Initial. (Year). Article title in lower case except first word and proper nouns. *Title of Journal, Volume*(Issue), page numbers.

CHAPTER 4

Dissection of a literature review

The stand-alone literature review

In most sophomore biology classes in high schools, students are asked at one point to cut open a frog, identify the various internal organs and draw a diagram of what they find. This exercise is my intention here. I will be cutting open and revealing to you the requisite parts of a literature review. In the following section we will dissect an article that was written as a stand-alone literature review. The purpose of the literature review as its own article is to tell us where we have been on a topic, and to light the way for where the field should go next.



This specimen we will be dissecting was written by De Veirman, Hudders, and Nelson (2019). Their research focuses on the literature of social media influencers' impact on children. Excerpts are provided for our dissection, but you can find the full article here:

De Veirman, M., Hudders, L., & Nelson, M. (2019). What is influencer marketing and how does it target children? A review and direction for future research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10.

What is influencer marketing and how does it target children? A review and direction for future research

Children nowadays spend many hours online watching YouTube videos in which their favorite vloggers are playing games, unboxing toys, reviewing products, making jokes or just going about their daily activities. These vloggers regularly post attractive and entertaining content in the hope of building a large follower base. Although many of these vloggers are adults, the number of child vloggers is flourishing. The famous child vlogger Ryan of Ryan's World, for instance, has more than 19 million viewers and he is (at age seven) a social media influencer. The popularity of these vloggers incited advertisers to include them as a new marketing communication tool, also referred to as influencer marketing, in their marketing strategy. Accordingly, many influential vloggers now receive free products from brands in return for a mention in one of their videos and their other social media (e.g., TikTok or Instagram) and some are even paid to create a sponsored post or video and distribute it to their followers. This sponsored content appears to be highly influential and may affect young children's brand preferences. Given the limited advertising literacy skills (i.e., knowledge of advertising and skills to critically reflect on this advertising) of children under age 12, they are a vulnerable target group when it comes to persuasion. Therefore, caution is needed when implementing this marketing tactic to target them. However, research on how influencer marketing affects young children (under 12) is scarce and it is unclear how these young children can be empowered to critically cope with this fairly new form of persuasion. This paper therefore aims to shed light on why and how social media influencers have persuasive power over their young followers. The paper starts with providing insights into how and why social media influencers became a new source in advertising. We then discuss the few studies that have been conducted on influencer marketing among young children (under 12), *based on a systematic literature review, and take these findings to formulate societal and policy implications and develop a future research agenda.*tent here.

In this introductory paragraph, the authors achieve three main goals. First, they provide needed background information on the issue as a contemporary problem. This article is focused on the practical implications of the theories they will summarize in this literature review. Notice they mention the various forms of media and influence and provide some examples. Second, they provide insights as to why this might be problematic, socially. They are making the case here for why research needs to be summarized so that this population of consumers can be better served (and protected). This leads them to the third goal which is to describe how their summary addresses the problems outlined in the second goal. Take note of the clearly identifiable thesis found at the end of the introduction – "This paper therefore aims to shed light on why and how social media influencers have persuasive power over their young followers."

The purpose of this review is threefold. First, the research aims to

provide insights into the importance of social media influencers as a source in advertising targeting children. In
order to adopt a theoretical approach to children's processing of influencer marketing, we draw upon existing theoretical and empirical work regarding source effects in persuasion. During
childhood, children encounter different advertising sources shaping their tastes and preferences, trying to turn them into brand loyalists as they grow older. Social media influencers
can be perceived as a new type of real-life endorser affecting children's and their parents' consumption behavior. Second, this paper provides a review of the current (limited) academic
research on influencer marketing targeted at children. Additionally, societal and policy implications of this tactic in the context of prior research are discussed. Third, a future research agenda that may foster academic research on the topic is included. This way, we hope our review may provide a basis for marketing related regulation, policies, and parent intervention strategies and thus help ensure the protection of children.

The authors continue with a longer introduction to the literature review by providing specific case studies and citing the relevancy and dangers of the issue. They conclude that section with the following paragraph. You can see the practical implications of summarizing the research, and the need for the literature review in that the field is just growing and has a wide breadth of topics which have not been synthesized. This is an immature research fields that needs a scholar to categorize into themes and research tracks. The future research agenda is the primary outcome of such a literature review, but must be bolstered by the findings of the literature review itself.

The importance of the source as sender of the object of information has been well recognized in the communication and advertising literature. Already in 1948, Laswell emphasized that every communication involves a message, a medium, a recipient, and a source (Lasswell, 1948). In advertising, a distinction can be made between the one who bears financial and legal responsibility for the message and the one who communicates the brand's message (Stern, 1994). As such, in the latter sense, brands may create or license a character or pay an endorser or spokesperson to influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. The persuasiveness of advertising is strongly influenced by consumers' perception of these sources (see Wilson and Sherrell, 1993 for a meta-analysis). For instance, source credibility plays a critical role in how consumers evaluate brands and products, whereby a positive evaluation of the credibility of the source is likely to translate into positive advertising outcomes (Sternthal et al., 1978; Ohanian, 1991). Source credibility consists of two dimensions: trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, believability, and morality of the endorser, while

expertise refers to the endorser's competence, knowledge, and skills (Hovland et al., 1953; Sternthal et al., 1978; Erdogan, 1999; Flanagin and Metzger, 2007).

The authors now begin their review of the literature by citing the original thinkers (seminal authors). You can usually pick out seminal works by the date. A robust description of the seminal work is not needed because others reading your work will be well familiar with them. Laswell (1948) began the discussion on communication in advertising. Because this literature review is focused on advertising to children through social media influencers, this seems like a logical beginning to their literature review. Other ideas generated by early works are also cited. Stern's (1994) work on branding, Sternhal et al's. (1978) research on credibility in advertising, and Hovland's (1953) empirical investigations of trustworthiness and expertise all become solid starting points for this literature review. The principles theories of these seminal works are tangentially related to the research project at hand. However, the constructs and dynamics of these theories apply in the same manner to the traditional advertising as they do for social media influence on children – that is, how is media being consumed?

Both trustworthiness and expertise have been found to enhance advertising effectiveness (Amos et al., 2008). Furthermore, the physical appearance or attractiveness of the source plays a major role in the endorsers' credibility and, consequently, persuasiveness (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1991). Even among children, using attractive peer models has been shown to increase advertising effectiveness (e.g., Van de Sompel and Vermeir, 2016). Source attractiveness is driven by factors such as perceived similarity, familiarity, and likeability of the source. Familiarity refers to the extent to which one knows the source through exposure; likability is defined as affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior, while similarity is the supposed resemblance between the source and receiver of the message (McGuire, 1985). According to McGuire (1985), sources who are known to, liked by, and/or similar to the consumer are found to be attractive and, as a result, are persuasive. Moreover, these source factors contribute to consumers' identification with the source, which increases the likelihood they will adopt their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Kelman, 1961; Basil, 1996). When consumers identify with the source, they will likely imitate his/her behavior, including the products he/she uses (Kelman, 1961), also referred to as social learning (Bandura et al., 1961). Indeed, as sources in advertising usually show the usefulness of the product they endorse and how to use it, this action may lead to observational learning and modeling of their behavior accordingly (Bandura et al., 1966). Moreover, next to family and friends, sources used in advertising may serve as role models they refer to in their identity formation (Lloyd, 2002; Hoffner and Buchanan, 2005). As a result, when advertising sources are paired with products, the positive affective responses toward those sources may transfer onto the products (Acuff and Reiher, 1999; McNeal, 2007; de Droog et al., 2012), which has been referred to as a meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989). Importantly, crucial to the effectiveness of endorsement marketing is a good fit between the source and the product he/she endorses, which has been referred to as the match-up hypothesis in celebrity research (Kamins, 1990). To conclude, the likelihood of the former process to occur increases when consumers develop a parasocial relationship (parasocial interaction; PSI) with the source (Tsay-Vogel and Schwartz, 2014). PSI, as introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), refers to the relationships consumers develop with media characters, making them important sources of information (Rubin et al., 1985). Accordingly, when consumers identify with a source and their brand-usage behavior, they will likely adopt this behavior (Naderer et al., 2018). As the need for companionship, which is the main driver for relationship formation, emerges in childhood (Hoffner, 2008), children typically engage in the formation of PSI's (de Droog et al., 2012). The above theoretical insights explain the success of sources used in advertising in general. As such, this robust body of literature has demonstrated that the source in the message is important for persuasion effects. These processes may also apply to social media influencers. Before discussing how influencers may affect children, we will first provide an overview of the different sources that are used in advertising targeting children and discuss how influencers evolved as a new source in advertising.

The authors continue by exploring the field of advertising and the dynamics of theories which apply to influencing. The seminal theory of Badura (1966) on social cognition (that is, how do we learn from each other) is directly impactful on how children are being influenced by media. The last sentence of this section provides transition to the next section, which is good employment of academic writing.

The following three sections of their literature review are structured as follows:

In the next section of the literature review, the authors provide an overview of the various influencing methods which target children which include brand and licensed characters as well as celebrity and peer endorsers. In the subsequent section the authors provide an overview of social media marketing in general, with emphasis on how influencers have become credible advertising means, relatable role models, and hidden persuaders. They then establish an understanding of traditional advertising targeting children. Building upon the theories outlined in these first sections, they conclude by providing a synthesis of the literature as it relates to current research on influencer advertising towards children.

Three experimental studies examined how children are affected by sponsored vlogs and one study focused on how parents of children between the ages of four and 11 react to sponsored vlogs. First, two studies examined the impact of social media influencer marketing on children's food intake (Coates et al., 2019a,b). The first study is a randomized trial with a between subjects design in which 176 children (9–11 years) were exposed to mock-Instagram profiles of two popular vloggers, either promoting healthy or unhealthy snacks. Results showed that influencer marketing of unhealthy foods increased children's immediate food intake, whereas the equivalent marketing of healthy foods had no effect. In their second study, an advertising
disclosure was included to alert children on the inclusion of advertising. In a between-subjects design, 151 children (9–11 years) were exposed to popular YouTubers' vlogs including a non-food product, or an unhealthy snack with or without an advertising disclosure. Participants' intake of

the marketed snack and an alternative brand of the same snack were measured. In line with their first study, influencer marketing increased children's immediate intake of the promoted snack relative to an alternative non-food brand (control condition). Remarkably, the inclusion of an advertising disclosure increased the effect, as children who viewed food marketing with a disclosure (and not those without) consumed 41% more of the promoted snack compared to the control group. The study of De Jans et al. (2019) examined how an educational vlog can help children (11–14 years) cope with advertising. In an experimental study (N = 160), using a two (advertising disclosure: no disclosure versus disclosure) by two (peer-based advertising literacy intervention) between-subjects design, they examined how an advertising disclosure can reduce the persuasiveness of sponsored vlogs and how watching an educational vlog moderates these effects. The results show that an advertising disclosure increased their recognition of advertising and their affective advertising literacy for sponsored vlogs, and that only affective advertising literacy negatively affected influencer trustworthiness and PSI and purchase intention accordingly. Moreover, when young adolescents were informed about advertising through an informational vlog (i.e., peerbased advertising literacy intervention), positive effects on the influencer and subsequently on advertising effects were found of an advertising disclosure. Evans et al. (2018) examined how parents of young children cope with sponsored vlogging on YouTube. They gauged parents' understanding of and responses to sponsored child influencer unboxing videos. Through an experimental design among 418 parents, they assessed the influence of sponsorship text disclosure (present or absent) and sponsor pre-roll (sponsor pre-roll, nonsponsor pre-roll, and no pre-roll) for a toy on conceptual persuasion knowledge, perceptions of sponsorship transparency, and different outcome measures. Moreover, they explored how parental mediation influences the outcomes. They found that sponsor variations in pre-roll advertising (sponsor versus nonsponsor versus none) and sponsor text disclosure (present versus absent) conditions did not affect parents' conceptual persuasion knowledge of the unboxing video. However, if a sponsor pre-roll ad was included, parents reported higher levels of sponsorship transparency of the unboxing video compared to parents who saw no pre-roll ad or a nonsponsor pre-roll ad. There was no additional effect on sponsorship transparency or conceptual persuasion knowledge when a sponsor text disclosure was included. Moreover, high levels of parental mediation conditionally impacted the indirect effect of a sponsor pre-roll advertisement via sponsorship transparency on perceptions of the unboxing video and attitudes toward the sponsor.

The conclusion section follows which emphasizes the implications for both society and what regulators can do to prevent some of the dangers associated with the influence of children. They make recommendations on future research in subsequent sections on influencer marketing strategies, the impact of influencer marketing on minor audiences, empowering children, and protecting children.

A number of societal and policy implications arise from the findings of prior research discussed above. More specifically, they may be important for policy aimed at protecting children's
interests. Most prior research focused on children's exposure to and perception of influencer marketing. The above studies show that children spend a lot of time watching videos of their favorite influencers, in which they also encounter influencer marketing practices (e.g., Marsh, 2016; Folkvord et al., 2019; Martínez and Olsson, 2019). Moreover, they are also influenced by the content these influencers post and susceptible to the commercial messages incorporated in it (e.g., Folkvord et al., 2019; Martínez and Olsson, 2019), specifically those on (unhealthy) foods and beverages (e.g., De Jans et al., 2019;Coates et al., 2019a,b). Considering children's susceptibility toinfluencer marketing practices, the findings of the above discussed prior research support the importance of existing guidelines and regulations stressing the fact that advertising should be recognizable as such, in particular for minor audiences. Two studies (De Jans et al., 2019; Coates et al., 2019b) tested the impact of an advertising disclosure on minors' recognition of and susceptibility to influencer marketing. While both studies have shown that the inclusion of an advertising disclosure helps children recognize advertising, the study of Coates et al. (2019b) found that this increased recognition actually increased the effectiveness of influencer marketing, resulting in a higher intake of the promoted snack. Moreover, De Jans et al. (2019) found that the inclusion of an advertising disclosure may have positive effects on the influencer and subsequently on advertising effectiveness when minors were informed about advertising through an advertising literacy intervention in the format of an informational vlog. These studies suggest that a disclosure indeed helps children recognize influencer marketing

practices as advertising and thus protects children from subconscious persuasion, without necessarily having a negative impact on the influencer and advertising effectiveness. In addition, Evans et al. (2018) found that sponsorship transparency in child-directed content is also appreciated by parents and has a positive effect on parents' perceptions of unboxing videos, attitude toward the brand, and attitude toward the sponsor.

Literature review as part of a full paper

The following section is a dissection of an actual literature review which was crafted as part of an article entitled "The Halloween indicator is more a treat than a trick" which was published in the Journal of Accounting and Finance (2017). For context, this article was a research piece on the "Halloween indicator" which is a stock market phenomenon whereby investing slow down in the summer and pick up in the fall (right around Halloween). The authors conducted a quantitative analysis of the Halloween indicator in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

We will dissect each section and call out the progression of the literature review – beginning with seminal works and following the nuances, debates, controversies, modern understandings, and most importantly, how the empirical research study being conducted adds to the body of knowledge (remember, we are making an ever so slight bump on the edge of the sphere of knowledge). It is only after identifying the shoulders of giants, and the gaps in understanding that authors can make the case for why their research is important and relevant. Excerpts of the article's literature review with annotations are captured here.

The literature review section of this article begins:

The seminal work of Bouman and Jacobsen (2002) spurred a debate in the literature regarding stock market efficiency, and extended the research on a growing body of literature on calendar anomalies in general.

The authors tip their hat to a seminal work, that of Bouman and Jacobsen (2002) who conducted an exhaustive study on the Halloween indicator. They are widely recognized as being the first major review of the issue and are considered a veritable seminal work. Their work spurs investigation not only into the summer-fall calendar anomaly in stock markets, but other seasonal anomalies as well.

Most prominent among these recognized calendar anomalies is the January effect, whereby stocks tend to rally in the first month of the year. The January effect has been found to exist in continental Europe markets (Canestrelli and Ziemba, 2000), the United Kingdom (Arsad and Coutts, 1997), Australia (Officer, 1975), Japan (Ziemba, 1991), and Thailand (Holden, Thompson, & Ruangrit, 2005). Additional calendar anomalies include the Monday effect, turn-of-the-month effect, and the holiday effect.

Because Bouman and Jacobsen (2002) started a dialogue on a bevy of other anomalies, the authors briefly mention them here. What this does is provide background on Halloween indicator as one of many other seasonal anomalies.

Andrade, Chhaochharia and Fuerst (2013) present two challenges to these market trends in that they are difficult to trade around given the significant transaction costs associated with trying to capture these arbitrage opportunities, and that in most cases the market opportunities have dissipated since each of these has been identified.

After identifying and articulating the existence of calendar anomalies, some scholars began to explore the practical implications, and add to the scholarly discussion by bridging theory and practice.

In response to the findings presented by Bouman and Jacobsen's (2002), Jacobsen and Visaltanachoti (2009) re-evaluate Halloween indicator in terms of specific U.S. sectors and industries. They find that the Halloween indicator differs across 17 sectors and 49 industries. Specifically, the effect was "almost absent in sectors and industries related to consumer consumption but in production sectors and industries" (p. 439).

As scholars continue to uncover the facets of a particular research string, they can sometimes disagree, or find differences in new contexts. The authors of the article include this (mini) controversy here.

Jacobsen and Zhang (2012) conduct the most comprehensive research study on the subject to include all available years in all countries for which data was available. They analyze more than 300 years of market information, and show that the Halloween indicator can be observed over the previous three centuries. Investors utilizing the "sell in May and go away" strategy during this period would have beaten the buy-and-hold strategy by more than 80% of the time.

Once there is enough dialogue on an issue in the literature, some scholars begin to see how far back the idea originated, or can be traced. Notice here that Jacobsen, a seminal author, is conducting a more comprehensive look at the Halloween indicator. This work of Jacobsen and Zhang (2002) followed stock market occurrences of the Halloween indicator dating back all the way to the 18th century London stock market.

Andrade, Chhaochharia, and Fuerst (2013) validate the existence of the Halloween indicator. They find that not only can the Halloween indicator still be observed in the stock market, but that trading strategies could be employed to capture the effect in foreign currency valuations, credit markets, and volatility risk premiums. Despite the strong evidence presented by Bouman and Jacobsen (2002), Jacobsen and Zhang (2012), and Andrade, Chhaochharia, and Fuerst (2013), several scholars have postulated alternative explanations for the Halloween indicator. Most notably, Lucey and Zhao (2008) present contradictory evidence that attributes the difference in the two halves of the year to the January effect. Bouman and Jacobsen (2002) remove January from their data set and the results "reject the hypothesis that the [Halloween indicator] is the January effect in disguise" (p.1627). Jacobsen and Zhang (2012) identify the January effect as a regular occurrence beginning in 1830, but this anomaly alone does not explain the November through April return premiums. Some argue that the Halloween effect is a result of data mining (Maberly & Pierce, 2004). In response to the data mining claim, Jacobsen and Zhang (2012) analyze the entire available data set spanning 300 years and their results refute the notion that the Halloween effect is a data-driven result. They show that the anomaly exists in markets across the globe in both developed and emerging markets and has remained consistent over time. Another possible explanation for the Halloween indicator anomaly is that November through April has a higher risk profile that naturally leads to a higher return. Bouman and Jacobsen (2002) show that risk, as measured by standard deviation, is actually higher in May-October than in November-April period for most countries in their sample. A final explanation for the Halloween indicator is that during the summer months, investors take more vacation and this affects their trading strategy.

Alas we have a full-fledged debate in the academic literature as scholars attempt to explain the causes, whether it actually exists, and more practical implications. As research trains mature and develop, there will be more disagreements, new developments, and in many cases consensus of an idea or thought once enough studies confirm it. The purpose of the literature review should explore all of these controversies, confirmatory studies, and variances so that the importance of the study currently conducted can be seen as relevant and an addition to the academic debate on the issue.

This paper revisits the Halloween effect and investigates whether this anomaly can still be observed during and after the 2008 financial crisis. Given the extreme impact of the 2008 financial crisis, it would be interesting to study if the Halloween effect has survived or diminished in the fallout. It is extremely difficult and costly to identify a winning trading strategy in current stock market environment, especially during a bear market. This paper contributes to the literature in several different ways. First, we examine the existence of the Halloween effect during and after the most recent global financial crisis. Second, we propose an aggressive trading strategy that exploits the underperformance of the stock market in summer months. Third, this paper offers a new explanation of the Halloween indicator anomaly.

Finally, the authors make their case for why and how the study they are conducting advances knowledge on the issue. Notice that research articles can advance understanding in more than one way at a time. This study investigates the issue after a major crisis to see if it still exists, then provides a practice recommendation, and finally explains the origins of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 5

Mastering the use of academic language

The first step to effective academic writing is to understand why you are using academic language. Academic language is a tool to help your reader understand your ideas, believe they are credible, and easily share them with others. This is true whether you are writing your first undergraduate term paper, master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, or manuscript for journal publication. This chapter is dedicated to helping you better understand the purpose of academic writing, and how you can use it to improve the quality of work. The result will be a better grade, passing score on thesis defense, or acceptance of a paper to a journal. Important to note is that solid academic alone will not be sufficient in achieving these ends. However, poor use of academic language will prevent you from doing so.

Helping your Reader Understand your Ideas

Academic language emerged from scientific language. As science developed and the methodical exploration of the world expanded beyond the work of a handful, opportunities for confusion proliferated. How could an individual studying insects in Europe, for instance, determine if their observations concerned the same insect that was being studied by an individual in North America? The two scientists might be writing in different languages, using local names for the insects being observed, and analyzing the insects using different categories or frameworks for observing the insects' various parts, systems, and environments. A common language was needed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge. What developed was a vocabulary of precision. A six-legged, pebble-sized creature was no longer an iridescent object of fascination, but *Popillia japonica*. *Popillia japonica* is a name built on standard conventions that allow it to communicate information about the creature's source of energy, body structure and composition, mobility, method of reproduction, means of interacting with the physical world, and more. *Popillia japonica* may be confusing and meaningless to people who do not study insects, but to those who do, using the name is a signal that you are an insider who is credible, is immediately clarifying, and makes it easier for others to talk about and build on your work.

Establishing your Credibility

A primary goal of academic writing is to establish your credibility. It is important to remember that you are not inherently credible. Your reader does not care what you think, and to the contrary, has been trained as an academic to be skeptical of any assertion that you make. Like a complex equation whose output is incorrect if even one of its variables is erroneous, your academic writing will likely be considered "not credible" and ignored if you use the wrong arguments or words.

The Right Arguments

Point of View and Source of Authority. The language you use is a reliable clue to the types of arguments you are employing. Academic writing is always written in third-person because you – the author, need to position yourself as an objective reporter and observer. If you find yourself writing (or thinking) with the word "I," you have slipped into a subjective account of your work. Consider the difference between how a typical undergraduate students might write about Elton Mayo, and how the same idea might be expressed in professional academic writing.

An undergraduate might write:

> "I think something else that Elton Mayo noticed was that people don't just care about money. People also want to belong to a group, and sometimes that feels even more important than money."

An academic writer might write:

> "A second conclusion that Mayo readily reported in his research was that financial incentives were subordinate to the worker's desire to belong to the informal organization."

In the first example, the writer has positioned themselves as the source of authority. Everything that comes after "I think" will be interpreted as the author's personal opinion. The reader's opinion may be different, and if it is they may dismiss what the author is trying to say. In the second example, Mayo's work is positioned as the source of authority. The use of academic writing has moved the argument beyond the realm of personal opinions. The reader may personally believe that money is the only thing that motivates people, but they cannot argue about what Mayo did or did not write.

In a similar way, an undergraduate might write:

"Elton Mayo seems to think that people don't just care about money, but that isn't what I've observed! I've been a manager at Starbucks for two years, and I can say for sure that none of my employees care about anything more than their paycheck."

An academic writer might write:

"While Elton Mayo argues that financial incentives are subordinate to a worker's desire to belong to an informal organization, Herzberg offers a different perspective. For Herzberg, a sense of belonging is central to an employee's level of engagement and satisfaction, but appropriate financial incentives are prerequisite to the impact of these feelings."

Anyone can argue with your personal perspective or the validity of your experience. Academic writers solve this problem by using the writing and research of others to focus their audience on what previous research has established, and what it means.

Including Your Perspective. Research old and new should be the foundation of argument in academic writing, but there is still room for original thought. The key here is that your original thoughts should not serve as the justification for any argument that you make – they may be the conclusion. The basic format of an academic paper is a helpful guide to how your thought process should work:

Basic structure of an academic paper

1. Introduction and literature review: Is the question you are exploring relevant and why is it relevant? What have others already learned about it, and where is there room for you to add something helpful?
2. Methods: What established research tools did you use to explore the

question?

3. Results: What did you find?
4. Discussion: What do your results mean? What should be studied next?

In sections one through four, the author's unique thinking is on display in through the questions that are asked, how previous research is organized and interpreted, and in how research methods are selected and designed. The author is functioning in these sections as a confident but impersonal guide, helping the reader recognize a desirable destination and a trustworthy path to get there. Commentary and editorializing are saved for section four. The discussion section is the one place where it is appropriate for you to include your own perspective. Even here however, the opinions you offer should be grounded in what has been established and observed. You may speculate about what the results of the research mean, but this speculation must be rooted in the research – personal anecdotes, feelings and biases remain out of bounds and counterproductive.

The Right Words

Precision. In addition to the type of arguments you choose, the words you use (or do not use) will impact your credibility. Your word choices should be guided by your goals: help your reader understand your ideas, believe they are credible, and easily share them with others. As discussed above, the very nature of academic writing is built on the idea of precision. *Popillia japonica* is not just a name, but a name that tells the reader exactly which creature is being discussed and the basic biological characteristics of the species. Each field has its own lexicon of precision, and wielding it well enhances the clarity and credibility of your writing.

Precision goes beyond the vocabulary of your field. It is also a matter of choosing words that eliminate or reduce opportunity for confusion. Words related to time are easy places to confuse your reader. For example, an undergraduate might write:

> "Around 100 years ago, Elton Mayo conducted the Hawthorne studies."

"100 years ago" gives a sense of precision, but this precision is contextual; 100 years ago from when? Is it 100 years before the present, the time at which the reader is reading? Or is it 100 years prior to when the author was writing? If that is the intended meaning, was it 100 years prior to the initial draft, or 100 years prior to when the paper was published? Should the reader assume that "around" implies within a year or two of 100 years ago, or closer to a decade? All of these questions can be avoided by simply using the precise year when the studies took place.

Vague language sneaks into writing in other ways too. Adverbs indicating degree or frequency, and adjectives asserting a superlative signal a sentence that may require more precision. For example, an undergraduate might write:

"Most people of my generation think the best jobs are those that offers a good work life balance."

The sentence is vague in multiple ways. "Most" could mean many things, "my generation" is meaningless without context, and "best" and "a good work life balance" are subjective phrases that need to be explained. Who is "most people?" Your mom, that girl behind the counter you like, your dog, world renowned scholars?

Instead, an academic writer might write instead:

"In a 2022 survey by the Pew Research Center, 80% of Generation Z respondents indicated that a job offering flexible work hours would be more attractive to them than a job offering above average pay."

This sentence defines who is being discussed, and specifies how many of them share a clearly explained attribute. It is also not asking the reader to accept the statement on the author's authority, but points to research that establishes a valid basis for the claim.

Conciseness. Academic writing should be concise. It is not focused on reaching a word limit, but on communicating a worthwhile idea. Consider the examples below. A student writing a 10-page term paper about the significance of the Hawthorne Studies might write:

"An Australian by birth, Elton Mayo was eager to immigrate to the United States and investigate the country's booming industrial culture. He famously applied his highly analytical mind and unconventional academic background to better understand problems in cultivating positive labor force morale. Although he could not have known the future impact of his work at the time, his Hawthorne studies revealed central aspects of workplace psychology that continue to influence managers in all industries today. Among other things, Mayo discovered that workers – regardless of their particular job – responded in predictable ways to changes in their work environment. These changes were not necessarily what managers would have initially expected. Significantly, employee response to process and environment modifications implemented by management depended on whether or not they had been consulted by their superiors in advance of whatever change might take place. Mayo's key insight was to observe this phenomenon: if management wants to motivate employees to be more productive, it is vitally important to create opportunities for dialogue between managers and employees about the nature of the work to be done, and the opportunities that may exist to improve it."

An academic writer referring to Elton Mayo's work might write:

"Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Studies demonstrated that employee participation in decision making resulted in better productivity than short-term incentives alone."

The writer in the first example is focused on word count. Their writing includes various biographical, speculative, and redundant statements that are superfluous to understanding the significance of the Hawthorne Studies. Entire sentences (i.e., "These changes were not necessarily what managers would have initially expected ") contribute nothing to the reader's understanding of the concept. The academic writer in the second example is focused on the salient idea, and they have communicated it clearly in about one tenth of the space the first writer used.

Longer papers are not proof of better ideas. Unnecessary words and phrases distract your reader from what is most important. They can also open the door to criticism that undermines your credibility. A sentence claiming that Elton Mayo "famously applied his highly analytical mind and unconventional academic background to better understand problems in cultivating positive labor force morale" may seem like an innocuous yet intelligent statement, but readers could disagree that Mayo's background was unconventional, or wonder how the writer knows that Mayo had a "highly analytical mind." Doubts like these – which may not even be directly related to the core of your paper's argument, risk distracting from and discrediting whatever may follow. In academic writing, less is more.

Similarly, if one word can convey the same meaning as five words, one word is the better choice. If a widely known word can convey the same meaning as an obscure word, the common word is the better choice. The exception would be if the obscure word is part of vocabulary of your discipline. In that case, the "insider" word Is what should be used.

Sophistication. The English language contains more words than most other languages in the world. The BBC estimates that there are 171,000 words in use, while another 47,000 are obsolete (think Chaucer, Beowolf, and Bill Shakespeare). Writing well means commanding not just the day-to-day words, but a wider scope of more academic quality lexicon. English is the language of science, medicine, business, and air traffic control around the world, as well as prominent academic journals in most fields. Many educated individuals from other parts of the world learn English as a second language at a conversational level because of this usefulness. However, academic writers must master the language at a more sophisticated level. Doing so requires a more complex use of phrasing and wider scope of vocabulary. Relevant here is the origin of this sophistication – French!

Many of the "sophisticated" synonyms for common English words comes from French. For example, instead of "improve", academic write might say "ameliorate." The French word for improve is, yes, "améliorer." Other phrases are taken directly from French and used in academic writing without translation such as *fait accompli* (a task already done), *espirit de corps* (organizational culture), *raison d'etre* (reason for existence). The French language began a heavy influence on English when the Norman's conquested England in 1066. French became the language of elites in the English courts, government, and social elites for 200 years. French nobility sat on the English crown during this time until the French lost Normandy in 1204. Thereafter, English became the language of choice, but French already left an indelible influence on the use of English. The French linguist Henriette Walter estimates that more than two-thirds of the English language can trace their origins to French, despite English's roots as a Germanic language. Other cultures have used French as a marker of sophistication. If you read a Dostoevsky novel, you would see the Russian aristocracy speaking French. French was the language of international politics in Europe in the 19th century, and Russian nobles needed a language the non-elites wouldn't understand. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918, French became all but dead in Russian society. Even today, French represents sophistication – think perfume ads, supermodels, fashion, and wine. French remains as the backbone of modern academic English vernacular and serves as the basis for sophistication. As an academic writer (student or scholar) you should learn to embrace this level of sophistication and integrate a wider vocabulary in your writing. In the practical guidance section of this book, we provide examples of words you can replace in search of this sophistication.

The Right Frame

What to Build On. A challenge with any academic paper is where to begin. The relevant literature will be vast. Your first goal should be to identify work that is seminal. Seminal work is widely cited within your field, and is often used as frame or point of comparison to describe new research. As you read the literature of your discipline you will also begin to recognize enduring themes and current trending topics. Seminal work, enduring themes, and trending topics are all useful frames that you should seek to employ strategically. Building on and incorporating these things, even if your research topic is arcane, will make your work easier for others to find, easier for them to appreciate, and easier for them to connect to their own research and writing.

Worth a Thousand Words. Figures and conceptual frameworks can also make your ideas easier to share. From Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to Porters Five Forces, communicating an idea with a combination of simple illustrations and sparse text is a hallmark of influential and enduring academic writing. Before you begin to write, carefully consider how you might employ a visual explanation as an anchor for your writing. If you do this well, you will have made great progress toward helping your reader understand your ideas, believe they are credible, and easily share them with others.

The Right Project

In spite of academic writing's imperatives to be precise, concise, and impersonal, good academic writing will also feel human. This cannot be achieved by merely following the highest standards for research and writing, or even developing a deep knowledge of your field's literature and practice. The ineffable quality of "humanness" happens when a writer is genuinely interested in their work. Put plainly, their passion shows and becomes contagious. In an ocean of academic writing, humanness matters (this is not to say that an academic's passion for their project is a replacement for superior work – it is a necessary complement). It is difficult to persuade someone to care about a topic if we don't care about it ourselves.

Choosing a project that you sincerely care about impacts how your work will be received, but even more important, will shape the direction of your career. Your research and writing typically builds on itself, with one project opening up the door to another. Academia is full of pressure to simply produce publications. It can be tempting, especially early in your career, to chase any project that could lead to publication. Pursuing a limited number of such opportunities may be prudent, but beware; how you spend your time is how you define your career (and your life!). Do not thoughtlessly set yourself down a path that will be personally unfulfilling.

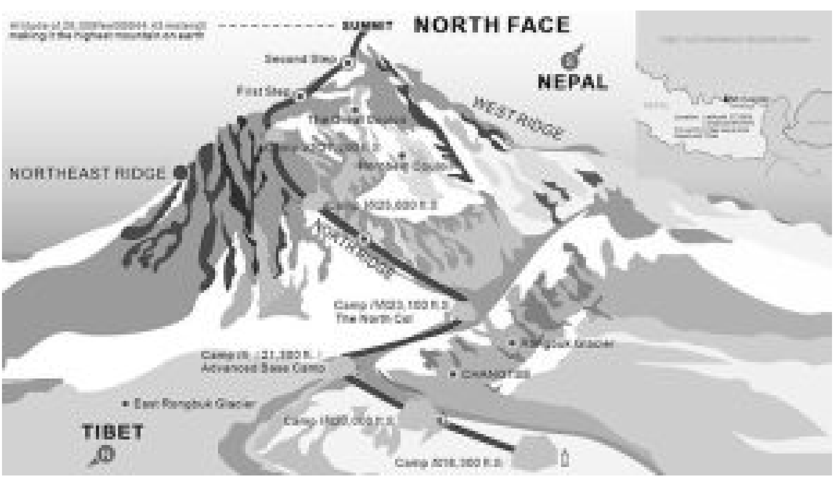
CHAPTER 6

Practical Guidance

Climbing Mount Everest

In 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa mountaineer guide Tenzing Norgay completed the first documented ascent of the highest mountain on our planet – Mount Everest. By 2023, only 7,000 human beings had repeated the accomplishment. Many people fail and too many die in their attempts. The rare climber who achieves this extraordinary feat garners social admiration both within the climbing community and outside. Making it to the top means enduring the oxygen deprived-atmosphere, enormous physical barriers of crevasse fields and sheer rock walls, unceasing uneasiness and psychological fears, and the volatile Himalayan weather that stops expeditions without notice. Perhaps most hindering of all is the short weather window (5-6 days of clear weather in the month of May). Starting too soon and the snow and cold impede progress, too late and the melting snow and softened ice fields create unmanageable fall hazards. Despite these elements throwing themselves at the climbers every step of the 29,032 foot climb, climbers engage in a practice which substantially improves their odds of a successful summit. That is, they acclimatize. The limited oxygen at altitude demands acclimation – climbers need to spend time allowing their bodies to function on less oxygen (anerobic respiration).

An assault on the mountain begins by hiking 40 miles to Camp 1 (about 18,300 feet). They spend several days at Camp 1 before making their *first* climb to Camp 2 (about 20,000 feet). Incredibly, the mountaineers spend the night at Camp 2 before returning to Camp 1 the next day. It seems redundant or a waste of time and precious, oxygen-deprived energy to climb 1,700 feet to Base Camp 2, only to return. The process is repeated between Base Camps 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, these meta-steps are absolutely necessary for the human body to properly prepare for high altitude adjustment. By the time they reach the death zone (above 26,000 feet), climbers have maximized their bodies' chances of making it to the summit through these previous up and down expeditions. "Mountaineers the world over follow a simple maxim: "climb high, sleep low." The idea is to expose the body gradually to higher and higher altitudes, forcing it to adjust, and then returning back down to sleep and recuperate at an altitude that the body is already used to." (Cunietti & Galanti, 2023). By the time a climber finishes the last step of the 29,032 foot climb, they have actually climbed the mountain 3-4 times.



(Source: Tibet Travel, Everest Maps)

An important lesson looms here for us, flat-land walking, sleep-in-a-bed every night kind of folks. If we want to achieve more advanced writing, better term papers, more credible journal publications, and acceptable dissertations, we need to engage in a similar process of acclimation. In this metaphor, we can visualize how to progress from undergraduate lower level courses to your upper level ones, the transition from bachelor's studies to masters, and a jump to the pinnacle of academic writing – doctoral writing, book authoring, and journal publications. As you begin each leg of the journey, you need to hike up to the next base camp to get comfortable with what the new standards and expectations are. What does this mean on a practical level? When you write your first undergraduate term paper, take your first draft to a tutor, professor, or peer who writes well. Understand and internalize this feedback deep enough to replicate it the next time your write. If you get comments that your thesis needs work, ask questions about how to improve exactly. See if the professor will share examples of good theses, either from other students or previous semester "A quality" papers. When working on your master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, look at successfully defended ones. Most schools have a repository that houses these documents. Read them, replicate their phrasing, ask the authors questions about their process. When you set a goal to publish in the top journals, start with the lower level ones. Practice getting feedback from reviewers by traying to understand every component of their feedback. "Climb high" means learning from the next level up you want to achieve, while "sleep low" means returning to the task at hand and apply what you have learned. In this section we provide practical guidance on how to adjust to the higher altitude that each level of complexity that academic writing demands from us. Allow this feedback to be your guide to the summit of whichever goal (your personal Everest) you have set for yourself.

Read and imitate

A quick story best illustrates our first practical guidance. Pia was a senior in college when her little brother Hans enrolled as a freshman. He was taking the English composition class that all freshmen take, and he asked his older sister if she would proofread his first essay. After reviewing the paper, she saw how horrendous his writing was and how poorly his composition was constructed. So she marked it up a bit, and gave it back to him. "The paper is terrible, but I have good news and I have bad news," she determined. "The bad news is that the paper is terrible, but the good news is that you are not a bad writer, you are a bad reader." Her point was that writing is a result of reading. We are not born knowing a language, and we certainly don't wake up knowing how to write well. We learn spoken language by imitation and observation. This is how we learn our local idioms and regional vocabulary as native speakers of our own language. Dad yells something out at a football game, and the next time you are watching a game, you repeat it, with a fairly confident understanding of what it means and when to use it. Writing is the same way. We imitate good writing only in the contexts of reading that we expose ourselves to. In this case, a lack of reading lead Hans to write how he spoke.

Simply stated, the most effective method for improving your writing is to read. Think about our climbers. Reading is the training they do before they even get to the base of the mountain. In a way, *what* you read doesn't really matter. The fact that you are reading does. Try reading all of the assigned chapters in your textbook. Read ESPN news articles. Read the USA Today. Read 100 journal articles from the journal you are targeting for your next publication. Reading allows you to see use of advanced language, new vocabulary, transitional phrasing, and perhaps infusion of personal perspective and critical conclusion drawing without violating the objectivity objective of good research. Read and imitate, then read some more. You will slowly, organically pick up on the habits of outstanding authors – how they vary long sentences with short ones, construct complex use of subordinate clauses, qualifying statements, along with simple stating of ideas. This reading is your preparation for the more advanced writing you will progress towards. This is your altitude gain in our Everest analogy, and will acclimate you to more advanced writing. Climb high, sleep low.

Avoid these pitfalls

Successfully standing on the top of Mount Everest requires unwavering commitment to safety protocols. There are certain behaviors that are imperative to avoid if you want to live. For example: never detach yourself from the rope, never be in a hurry, check harnesses, check knots, and the like. Similarly, good writing has danger areas (or behaviors you want to avoid). One of these behaviors you want to eliminate is called "data dumping."

The purpose of a literature is not simply to serve as a list of everything that has been studied in a single field. An effective one synthesizes, summarizes, and integrates the varying developments and perspective on a given topic. Resist the urge simply to "data dump" whereby you start going through authors one by one "Smith (2002) found . . . . . Jones (2006) discovered . . . . Martin (2012) concluded . . . ." Instead try to find themes and general trends that can be categorized and presented in a coherent manner without overwhelming the reader with the facts of scholarly articles.

Avoiding dangers and travelling safely is the only way to sustainably move up and down between base camps. Climb high, sleep low.

Fake it

No doubt, climbers on their attempt of Everest get scared. They would not be human otherwise. They must move forward despite the fear as they place one crampon in front of the other, dangling from an ice wall. One strategy to deal with this is to fake it. Act like you belong. Act like you're not scared and keep moving. The same holds true for making progress in academic writing. While reading allows you to internalize and repeat good writing, you can fake it in the meantime by applying a handful of “academic” words in your writing that will instantly improve its quality. There are four categories of substitutes that can serve as shortcuts while you are in the “fake it” stage. These include single word synonyms, alternative phrasing for citing research, unique ways to improve references, and transitional phrasing.

Alternative wording would include substituting the word “update” with the word “actualize,” or “support” with “bolster.” A word of caution here – be hesitant to simply find alternatives in a thesaurus without context. Look for sample sentences using words you find in thesaurus. Otherwise the use of the synonym you chose could be awkward, or worse, wrong. Some words require distinct prepositions to accompany them. This is why reading is important to reinforce usage. For example, you might find the word “augment” as a synonym to “add” and write the following sentence:

Supervisors augment to the culture by using emotional intelligence.

In this sentence the word augment has both an incorrect preposition (it actually doesn’t require one) as well as incorrect application towards the object. Augmenting usually means adding to something that can be quantified – like income, or scores, or data. Its ok to try new words, and even better to use them correctly. This takes practice and reading, but is an easy first step in improving your writing. Consider the following list of substitutes for common phrasing. In your next term paper, or academic paper, make an attempt to substitute three new words you have never used before. And then use the same three words in the next one, adding three more words.

Instead of:	Say:
related	tangential
classification	taxonomy
third	tertiary
conversation	téte-a-téte
related to themes	thematic
as well	to boot
change of form	transmute
something present everywhere	ubiquitous
support	underpinnings
the value place on something	valency
vocabulary	vernacular
connection	vinculation
by means of	vis-à-vis
sudden changes	viscitudes
perspective	*weltanshauung*
clear and obvious	*writ large*
attribute	impute
results in	aproximates

Instead of:	Say:
supposedly	purportedly
commonly regarded as	putative
central purpose	raison d'etre
coercion	rapaciousness
to make a strong protest	remonstrate
return to the source	ressourcement
important to note	salient
limited	scant
original	seminal
related to signs or symbols	semiotic
code of conduct	social moray
unchanging	static
to incorporate or combine	subsume
to undermine authority or idea	subvert
able to overcome	superable
not needed	superfluous
additional	supervenient
previously referenced	supra

Instead of:	Say:
lack of	paucity
filled with evil	peccant
prolong an action or thought	perseverate
writing that criticizes an idea	polemic
scientifically provable	positivism
to speculate on the past	postdict
practically speaking	pragmatic
professional practice	praxis
a preference for	predilection
predictive	prescient
obvious example	*prima facie*
most important	primacy
tendency	proclivity
provide evidence for others to review	proffer
to produce	progenerate
too much word or speech	prolixity
tendency	propensity
to steal	purloin

Instead of:	Say:
important writing	monolith
early stages	nascent
to reduce to nothing or eliminate	negation
connection	nexus
not feasible	non-starter
to make normalize or acceptable	normalize
recommended behavior or practice	normative
to hide or make unclear	obfuscate
remove	obviate
producing effects	operatant
define	operationalize
rank or file	ordinal
naturally forming	organic
practically speaking	ostensibly
a solution	panacea
for example	*par example*
the best of its kind	par excellance
appeal to emotion	pathos

Instead of:	Say:
undeniable	incontrovertible
not willing to believe	incredulity
irreplaceable	indispensible
the means	instrumentality
un-interested in different ideas	insular
not able to overcome	insuperable
relevant	intraneous
moving from place to place	itinerant
good judgement	judicious
existing, but not obvious	latent
to make use of	leverage
vocabulary	lexical
the logic of something	logos
creates	manifests
many	manifold
small increase	marginal
huge	meteoric
social context	milieu

Instead of:	Say:
categorize	collate
comparable	compatible
foundation of the research	conceptual framework
brevity, being concise	concision
at the same time	concomitant
at the same time	concurrent
mix two ideas	conflate
prove wrong	confute
comparable	congruent
highly skilled or competent	consummate
In today's world	contemporary
to provide background	contextualize
conflict with	contravene
related	corollary
body	corpus
something related to the main idea	correlate
a group of associates	coterie
to provide a context	couch

Instead of:	Say:
original which patterns the new	archetypal
reduce an emotion	assuage
not a specific moment in time	atemporal
reduce the force	attenuate
add to something	augment
favorable	auspicious
values-based	axiological
not happening at the same time	aysnchronous
attacked	beleaguered
something with two factors	binomial
support	bolster
a group	cadre
fundamental or principle	cardinal
provable	categorical
coming together	coalescence
an ancient book	codex
understandable	cogent
thinking	cognitive

Instead of:	Say:
unusual	aberrant
to be present in abundance	abound
put an end to	abrogate
to update	actualize
to infinity	*ad finitum*
to the sources	*ad fontes*
to make impure	adulteration
physical appearance	aesthetics
a combination or mixture	amalgam
a mixture of elements	amalgamation
improve the condition	ameliorate
belonging to a different time	anachronistic
something detested	anathema
support a primary purpose	anciallary
secondary	ancillary
a single story, limited evidence	anectdotal
concise and true statement	aphorism
compare	appose

Instead of:	Say:
lack of	dearth
remove from office	defenestrate
disasterous	deletrious
to make clear	deobfuscate
easing of political hostility	détente
to disseminate	diffuse
make clear	disambiguate
covering lots of topics without focus	discursive
to hold in low regard	disparage
different	disparate
lacks harmony	dissonant
something far away, but related	distal
different	divergent
able to change	dynamic
to make happen	effectuate
really bad	egregious
exit	egress
explain in detail	elucidate

Instead of:	Say:
just beginning	emerging
use	employ
how we know something	epistomological
understood by only a few	esoteric
organizational culture	*espirit de corp*
spirit or culture	ethos
to make worse	exacerbate
anticipated ideas or events	ex-ante
discuss a specific point	excursus
pressing or demanding	exigent
out of nothing	ex-nihilio
quickly or promptly	expeditiously
explain in detail	expound
existing	extant
not the main point	extraneous
expel	extrude
abilities	faculties
already decided	*fait accompli*

Instead of:	Say:
fertility	fecundity
unpredictable	frenetic
capable of producing	fruitive
applicable to a wide population	generalizability
relevant	germane
the whole of an idea or philosophy	*gestalt*
seriousness	gravitas
something that announces next idea	harbinger
political view	hegemony
to announce something coming	herald
mixed	heterogeneous
decision making	heuristic
related to how we study history	histiographic
similar	homogenous
abundant in resources and support	hyperstatic
unchangeable	immutable
inicial stages	incipient
attitude	inclination

The second way to fake it is to find alternative ways to reference the research or the body of knowledge on a particular subject. Often, undergraduate students will use the following phrase in their term paper, "An article I found talks about . . . ." There are more sophisticated and easily applicable ways to fix this. Instead of starting with "an article", instead focus on synthesizing several articles and state "Research shows that. . . . " and then provide individual citations. Consider the following comparison:

An article I found talks about how people should be more aware of emotions at work (Jones 2016). Another one showed how a manager would have employees who are more willing to be a part of the team (Smith, 2020).

This is clearly a poor a use of academic language. Instead start with a broad statement on the research, such as:

Research shows that emotional intelligence leads to positive organizational outcomes. For example, Jones (2016) found that emotional intelligence leads to higher levels of employee engagement, while Smith (2020) discovered a correlation between emotional intelligence and loyalty.

There are a few phrases that can be "faked" as you learn to become a good writer. Each of these need to be followed by citations of what the research has to tell us. If you make a statement which needs to be substantiated by a research citation, a reviewer or your teacher might respond "says who" or "which research." Use the following phrasing, followed by your citations of what the research shares.

Say:
Scholars have found…
Research suggests…
Previous studies…
Extant research…
Empirical evidence…

A common practice in the follow up of these statements is to provide a handful of individual contexts to which it applies. Remember that we need to synthesize what the research has found, but in some circumstances, we can show the variety of topics that the research covers outside the main themes. You can list these in a single sentence and then provide the citations in order at the end. Consider the following:

Empirical evidence suggests that corporate social responsibility impacts a wide scope of stakeholders. Research shows that corporate decision-making has a considerable impact on employees, customers, suppliers, and creditors (Hooks, 2004; Tackleberry, 2001; Hightower, 2021; Mahoney; 2015).

A third approach to faking it is to avoid the use of the word “said” when citing author’s work. “Lonestar (1985) said that . . . .” or “Barf (1978) said that . . . .” Instead, there is a long list of action verbs you can borrow from, depending on what the author actually said – did they confirm something, did they discover something, did they disagree?? Instead consider “Vespa (1987) offered that . . .” or “Skroob (2019) discovered. . . .”

Use the following list to cite individual sources, and avoid “said.”

Say:

suggested
found
concluded
posited
postulated
speculated
theorized
opined
formulated
offered
assented
dissented
agreed
described
held
maintained
constructed
purported
proffered
confirmed
contradicted

Finally, academic writing requires flow. Long sentences, short ones, and good transitional phrasing to connect ideas. An easy way to fake this composition is to add conjunctive adverbs to the beginning of sentences sporadically throughout the paper. Undergraduate students attempt to do this with the trite phrase "With that being said. . . " Instead, when adding to an existing train of thought, start a sentence off with "Moreover, ..." and when introducing an opposing viewpoint, start with "Contrarily, ...". Consider the following list of transitional phrasings:

Say:
Nonetheless
Notwithstanding
Additionally
Moreover
Consequentially
Incidentally
Furthermore
To boot
Conversely
To be sure

Engaging in these behaviors (substituting words, referencing research, transitions, and in-text citations) are the writing equivalent of climbing to Camp 2 while you acclimate to the altitude of good writing. Climb high, sleep low.

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