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How to Write and Submit an Academic  
Paper in 18 Weeks



[美] 史帝夫·华乐丝 (Steve Wallace) 著

# 如何成为学术论文写作高手

针对华人作者的18周技能强化训练



北京大学出版社  
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· 学术规范与研究方法丛书 ·

# How to Write and Submit an Academic Paper in 18 Weeks

# 前 言

这些年来，我所能接触到的、关于专业性写作指导的教学材料一直让我感到沮丧和担忧。这些关于专业性写作的教材很难被学生理解。

写作本书的想法，源于我在台湾交通大学教授技术性写作课程的经验，以及一直萦绕我心的华人研究者的需要。本人在本书中所使用的概念和语言都是被尽可能地简化了的，目的是为了减少读者在学习技术性写作的过程中遇到的障碍。本书包含十六章，涵盖了写作、修改以及在国际性期刊上提交学术论文等内容。每一章都包括了以下的小节：

## ● 如何撰写……（How to...）

这一小节通过在开头提出一系列问题来说明一篇标准的研究论文中包含的每个部分。通过回答这些问题，学生能够收集起那些他们撰写论文所需要的信息。这本书提供了针对摘要、引言、研究方法、研究结果、讨论、参考文献以及推荐信等内容的版式设计指导。

## ● 常见的写作错误以及改正方式（Common Writing Errors and Their Corrections）

此小节介绍常见的写作错误，并给出改正后的例句。

## ● 标点符号（Punctuation Point）

这一小节通过具体例子来介绍最基础的一些英语语法规则。

## ● 写作进程（The Writing Process）

这一小节提供了一些关于如何通过培养良好的写作习惯来保持积极和高效的写作状态的小建议。

- **向学术期刊投稿的建议 ( Tips for Journal Submission )**

这一小节教授利用编辑回应、审读人评论以及期刊投稿指导等内容来掌握关键的发表论文策略。善用这些指南，学习者能够避免犯常见的投稿错误，譬如：攻击潜在的评论者，或是暗示论文此前被拒过。

- **不恰当的词汇以及改进建议 ( Inappropriate Vocabulary and Improvement )**

针对学生在技术性写作中常用的一些易被误解的单词和短语，这个小节将教给学生一些表述更有力的、可用于替换的单词或短语。

- **学术词汇 ( Academic Vocabulary )**

这个部分列举了每个学生都需要了解的一些重要词汇。

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# I WRITING THE INTRODUCTION

## Chapter 1 What Is the Problem?

### How to write the Introduction

The introduction is certainly the most read section of any research paper, and it largely determines the reader's or reviewer's attitude toward the work. Therefore, it is probably the most delicate part of the writing of a paper. Unfortunately, many people face difficulties when writing the introduction.

The purpose of an introduction is to present the motivation behind the research, with the intention of defending it. An introduction also places your paper in a theoretical context and helps the reader to clearly understand your objectives. In addition, the introduction should grab the reader's attention completely. Below, we discuss the major components that should be included in an ideal introduction.

- A broad *theme* or *topic* of the study should be stated.
- The *academic importance* of the paper should be explained.
- The available *literature* should be summarized and previous studies that are most relevant to your research should be *cited*. In addition, if a previous study is replicated, it should be clearly stated along with an in-text citation.
- A discussion of the *knowledge gap* and *inconsistencies* found

should follow the literature, and the *benefits* of the study's main contribution should be highlighted.

- A clear indication of the *research question* addressed in the study, specific *objectives* that guide your research, the *context* in which the study was conducted, and the *units of analysis* used in the study should be provided in the introduction.

Simply put, an introduction should elaborate on the *Motivation*, *Literature Review*, *Knowledge Gap*, and *Research Question*.

Since the introduction should only be a brief overview of the entire paper, elaborating on the major components is not necessary. Moreover, the introduction should be composed toward the end of writing a paper, because writing the entire paper first can help in highlighting the most important points.

The different parts of the introduction are elaborated in this section. Including these steps will help you to write an effective introduction to your paper.

## I. Theme or Topic

Since your paper will also be read by people outside the domain, writing the paper in a simple, yet effective way is essential for people to understand the relevance of your research. In addition, it is important that you introduce the broad theme or topic of your research in the introduction for the reader to clearly understand what the research is about. To achieve this, the following points must be followed.

- *Avoid* the use of technical jargons in the introduction.
- *Do not* begin the introduction with the research question or hypothesis.
- *Define* technical terms and constructs (concepts).

## II. Academic Importance

A paper's academic importance can be determined by the lack of previous research on the topic, and by highlighting the gaps and inconsistencies in the literature. However, writing a comprehensive review of the field should be avoided.

### III. Literature

A summary of the available literature should be concise and should mostly include recent studies that are directly related to the research. In addition, some studies that should be included must be from the recent past (i.e., studies from the last five years). If the research is a replication of a previous study, a brief introduction to that study along with the citation should be mentioned in this section.

### IV. Knowledge Gap

Since a research aims at expanding the knowledge on a specific topic, a research should also address specific knowledge gaps, inconsistencies, and controversies in the literature. In addition, the main contribution of the study should be mentioned in this component, which will contribute to motivate the importance of the study.

### V. Research Question and Objectives

This component should clearly indicate

- The research question addressed in the paper;
- The specific research objectives that guide the research;
- The context in which the study was conducted;
- The units of analysis used in the paper.

### VI. Outlined Structure

This component should only include a brief outline of the flow of the entire paper.

## Citing the Literature

Following is the list of most important points to be remembered when providing citations in a literature.

Citing previous studies based on these points make the citations effective to your research. However, a few mistakes commonly seen when citing literature are

- Avoid writing a comprehensive literature review of the field.
- Citations must be current and relevant.
- Avoid citing studies that do not have a direct relevance to the study.
- Studies that contradict your study or propose alternate ideas must be cited.
- Recent studies (not older than five years) must be cited to indicate the findings. Older studies should be cited only to explain a change of thought in a particular field or the development of a particular method.

- Citing one source repeatedly;
- Citing irrelevant sources;
- Over citing definitions;
- Misattributing sources;
- Citing implications as facts;
- Too many quotations.

## Literature Review

A literature review forms the theoretical basis of an article and discusses published information in a particular field. It can be just a summary of the sources, but it usually is an organizational pattern and combines the summary, critical analysis, and synthesis, i.e., a recap, evaluation, and reorganization of information. Generally, a literature review provides a new interpretation of past studies, combines new interpretations with previous interpretations, or traces the intellectual progression of the field. This helps in relating the study to previous studies in that field. A literature review can be written to provide a theoretical framework and rationale for a research.

There are four questions that first-time researchers need to examine when writing a literature review.

- Which aspects should be included in a literature review?
- How should the information in a literature review be synthesized?
- How should the literature review be structured?
- What writing style should be used when writing a literature review?

## I. Which Aspects Should Be Included in a Literature Review?

An effective literature review should always include the following components:

- A brief discussion of where and how the study or research conforms to the broader view of the field.
- A definition of all the key concepts and constructs used in the paper.
- A discussion that focuses and synthesizes previous relevant research findings.
- A summary of the existing approaches explaining how previous research-measured constructs the current study measures.
- A theoretical support for the hypotheses to be tested.

Reviewers will look for these five aspects in the literature review. However, these aspects should not be used as main headings.

## II. How Should the Information in a Literature Review Be Synthesized?

Since a literature review is not a chronological summary of the paper, it is necessary to synthesize existing knowledge. This should be done *without* plagiarizing or paraphrasing previous studies. This section elaborates on how to synthesize three types of information, namely definitions, lists of attributes or factors, and opposing viewpoints.

### ► Definitions

All concepts or constructs and technical terms need to be defined in the literature. It is best to define the concept or term immediately after its first mention in the paper. However, these definitions should not be borrowed from previous research; rather a reviewed definition should be provided. In addition, these definitions should not be listed consecutively in a literature review.

### ► Attributes or Factors

Generally, authors list the different attributes, factors, elements, or issues when discussing a similar topic. These factors suggest the effectiveness of a particular method or technique. However, these attributes or factors should not be merely listed in the literature review. Instead, a summary of these factors should be included in the literature review.

## ► Opposing Viewpoints

Several authors studying a similar problem will share opposing viewpoints. However, these viewpoints can be compared to as a point of discussion in a literature review. In addition, the opposing viewpoints should clearly explain the differences in these viewpoints. To further enhance the literature review, specific viewpoints that are supported should be elaborated on briefly stating reasons for accepting those viewpoints.

### III. How Should the Literature Review Be Structured?

To write an effective literature review, following a logical structure is crucial. That is, the different sections and subsections of the literature review should be linked. A few points that would help in better structuring the review are listed below.

- Place the specific topic being discussed in a relevant, yet broader context and then focus the discussion on more specific issues.
- The headings should be brief and should give a detailed overview of the review. One-word titles should be avoided.
- Use relevant diagrams and discuss the comparison between several constructs crucial to the research.
- Define the technical terms and concepts clearly.
- The text provided should be relevant to the headings under which they are provided.
- Provide a brief motivation for the hypotheses of the research.

### IV. What Writing Style Should Be Used when Writing a Literature Review?

Literature reviews should generally be easy to read and understand. Simply put, a literature review should be clear for a non-academic person. This should be done while avoiding technical jargons, unfamiliar terms and phrases, and undefined technical abbreviations. In addition, having a clear and concise flow in the literature can help readers understand the entire process of the research.

State the research questions in the literature review and clearly elaborate on how the attempted research responds to those questions. When doing this, briefly elaborate on the methods used and also define the ways the research develop on or provide a contrast to previous studies.

To sum up this chapter, the introduction to a research paper should



provide the *Motivation, Literature Review, Knowledge Gap, and Research Question*. Writing the introduction based on these points help ease this otherwise complex task. Similar to the abstract, the introduction is best written toward the end of the writing process. This may help in summarizing the entire paper effectively.

### Reviewer's Comment

*“The paper’s introduction needs to first address the more general aspects of the research topic before delving into the specifics of the problem. As a reader, I find myself lost and unable to tie the problem to the larger context.”*

— Reviewer, *IEEE Computing*

The reviewer in the above statement is suggesting that the author needs to first identify the more general aspects of the research, and then move toward the more specific aspects. By presenting the more general elements of the topic early in the introduction, and then focusing on more specific information that provides context, the author would have been able to help his reviewer understand the problem in a larger context.

Provide your statement of purpose and rationale. A good strategy is to write your introduction “backwards” in the beginning. This means to start with your specific purpose and then choose the context that you address in your study question. After you choose the context, you will know what general information you need to begin writing your introduction.

### What Is the Problem?

**Begin your introduction by clearly identifying your subject area.**

In the first few sentences of the introduction, use keywords from your title to focus directly on your topic. This places immediate focus on your subject without discussing information that is too general.

**Summarize other studies to provide context, key terms, and concepts so your reader can understand your research.**

The key strategy is to summarize what you already know about