

# Paper Writing in Practice

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## Tips for writing the introduction, plus mechanical features of different sections

### Summary of considerations in writing the introduction

- Purpose: prepare the reader for the rest of the paper without dwelling on extraneous background (or talking too deeply about the outcome of the study)
  - put the study into context (why are you doing it? why is it significant?)
  - provide information relevant to understanding the underlying logic
- Make sure that you:
  - identify the question being addressed (is what you answer in the discussion posed as a question here?)
  - make it clear why this information is worth having (provide background relevant to question)
  - stay focused on what is relevant (delete anything that is not)
  - describe and justify the experimental approach
  - state the answer to the major question you have identified (you have learned something).
- the editor will look here for more about the knowledge gap (and your approach to filling it)
- Audience for different sections:
  - As in the case of the results and discussion, this section is mainly for the benefit of “outsiders” (scientist not in your direct area of study, editors, etc.)
  - In contrast, the methods, data and legends will interest mainly “insiders” (scientists close to area of study)

### Moves in research paper introductions, according to Swales and Feak:

#### Move 1 Establishing a research territory

- a) by showing that the research area in general is important, central, interesting, problematic or relevant in some way (optional)
- b) by introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area (obligatory)

#### Move 2 Establishing a niche

- a) by indicating a gap in the previous research, or extending previous knowledge in some way (obligatory)

#### Move 3 Occupying the niche

- a) by outlining purpose or stating the nature of the present research (obligatory)
- b) by listing research questions or hypotheses (field dependent)
- c) by announcing principal findings (field dependent)
- d) by stating the value of the present research (field dependent)
- e) by indicating the structure of the research paper (field dependent)

Reproduced from Table 26, Swales & Feak, 2004, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills* (second edition).  
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