

# D50 Academic Writing

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# Summary

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Titles

Abstracts

Key words

Introduction

Methods

Results

Discussion

# ACADEMIC WRITING AND PUBLISHING

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**Scientific text:** precise, impersonal, objective + rhetoric and persuasion

**Characteristics:** 3<sup>rd</sup> person, passive tense, complex terminology, footnoting and referencing systems

**Structure follows the IMRD format:** Introduction, method, results, discussion

**Writing process:** hierarchically organized, goal-directed, problem-solving process

**4 main recursive processes:** planning, writing, editing, and reviewing (although, it does not necessarily follow this order).

More time is spent on planning and thinking at the start and on edition and reviewing at the end

# Continuation

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(Elbow, 1998): write first without giving much importance to spelling and syntax, which will be polished through editing and text refining to clarify statements.

For James Hartley: Product determines the process which can be many and varied (Research Professor at School of Psychology, University of Keele, UK).

**Non-native speakers:** it is more difficult to **read** and **write** in the appropriate style

Caveat: Automatic translation methods do not work for translation into formal scientific English

Native speakers are more aware of subtleties and nuances

# TITLES

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It stimulates reader's interest

It should be: attractive, inform the reader, be accurate

Attractive: It needs to stand out from other titles

Inform reader: has to tell what is the paper about

Accuracy: Use of key words (important because many computer-based search engines scan out articles based on them)

# Title Types: (many different types)

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Examples:

**General subject:** The age of adolescence, Designing instructional and informational text, On writing scientific articles in English

**Particularize on specific theme following general heading:** Pre-writing: the relation between thinking and feeling, The achievement of black Caribbean girls: good practice in Lambert schools

**Controlling question:** Is academic writing masculine? What is evidence-based practice – and do we want it too?

# Abstracts

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It is an statement: Describes larger work

self-contained, short, powerful

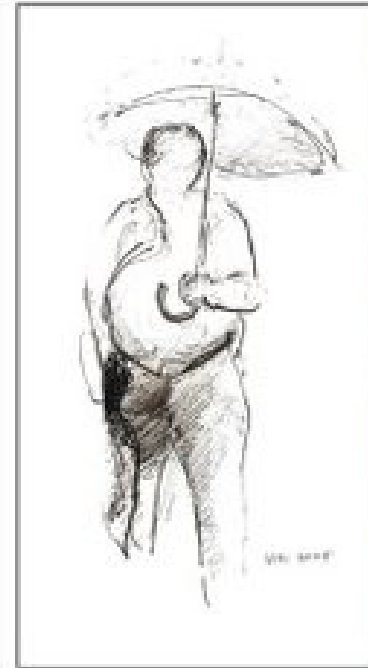
May indicate: Scope, purpose, results,  
and contents of the work.

May contain:  
Thesis, background, and conclusion

It is not a review or evaluation

It is an original document but

It is not an excerpted passage



# A Poorly Written Abstract

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**Article Title:** Elements of an Optimal Experience

**Authors:** Shall remain unnamed 😊

## **Abstract**

This paper presents and assesses a framework for an engineering capstone design program. We explain how student preparation, project selection, and instructor mentorship are the three key elements that must be addressed before the capstone experience is ready for the students. Next, we describe a way to administer and execute the capstone design experience including design workshops and lead engineers. We describe the importance in assessing the capstone design experience and report recent assessment results of our framework. We comment specifically on what students thought were the most important aspects of their experience in engineering capstone design and provide quantitative insight into what parts of the framework are most important.



# Critique:

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begins well: concise statement of the objectives but then wanders from good technical writing style.

It is written in first person (e.g. “We explain...”, “We discuss...”, “We comment...”, etc.).

No results are presented: only describes the organization of the paper e.g.

“Next, we describe... We comment specifically on what students thought were the most important aspects of their experience in engineering capstone design...”

It should summarize: actual results + how they were obtained.

*Example:*

“A statistical analysis was performed on answers to survey questions posed to students enrolled in a capstone design course at Georgia Tech. The analysis showed that students thought the most important aspects of their experience in engineering capstone design were quality of the instructor and quantity of student/instructor interaction time.”

# A Well Written Abstract

**Article Title:** Women Engineers in Kuwait: Perception of Gender Bias

**Authors:** P.A. Koushi, H.A. Al-Sanad, and A.M. Larkin of Kuwait University

## **Abstract**

The greatest obstacle to the development of policies for the curtailment of gender bias is lack of information on the scope and effects of the problem. This study represents an attempt to quantify attitudes toward gender bias among professional women engineers working in the State of Kuwait. The major findings that emerged were as follows: a) Since 1970, Kuwait has witnessed an enormous growth rate in the participation of women in higher education. b) With respect to the job-related factors of salary scale, professional treatment, responsibility, benefits, and vacation, a clear majority (68%) of the professional Kuwaiti women engineers surveyed expressed a feeling of equality with or even superiority to their male counterparts. c) The one job-related factor in which significant gender bias was found to be in operation was that of promotion to upper management positions. In this criterion, the women engineers surveyed felt “less than equal” to their male colleagues.

# Critique

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This abstract begins with a succinct statement of the problem and the objective of the paper

Overall results are clearly presented.

Key points observed:

- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Well expressed

# KEY WORDS

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1. Readers can judge whether or not an article contains material relevant to their interests
2. Useful in web-based searches to locate other materials on the same or similar topics
3. Help indexers/editors group together related materials
4. Allow editors/researchers to document changes in a subject discipline (over time)
5. Link the specific issues of concern to issues at a higher level of abstraction.

# Introduction

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As your primary reading audience of editor and referees will probably start reading at the Introduction, an effective Introduction is particularly important.

Referees are likely to look here for evidence to answer the following questions.

- 1 Is the contribution new?
- 2 Is the contribution significant?
- 3 Is it suitable for publication in the journal?

# Introductory Paragraph

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## General statements

- Introduce general topic of the essay
- Capture the reader's interest

## Thesis statement

- States specific topic
- May list subtopics/subdivisions of main topic/subtopics
- May indicate the pattern of organization of the essay
- Usually last sentence in the intro paragraph

## Funnel introduction

- From general to specific
- 1 or 2 very general sentences about the topic
- As sentences progress, they become more focused on the topic
- Last sentence states very specifically what the essay will be about



# Thesis statement pitfalls

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## Too general

- A college education is a good investment
- ✓ A college education is a good investment for four reasons (Improved)

## Simple announcements

- I am going to write about sport injuries
- ✓ Avoid sport injuries by taking a few simple precautions (Improved)

## States an obvious fact

- The internet is a communication superhighway
- ✓ The explosion of the internet has had both positive and negative consequences (Improved)

# METHODS

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Vary in journal articles but not as much as introductions

Brief and succinct (well known and standardized)

But they could be quite lengthy

Further elaboration is required when new methods are used

Deals with working through subsections

- Participants
- Measures
- Procedures



# RESULTS

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Presents main data that support/reject the hypothesis (tables and graphs)

Art of good results section is to take reader through a story. Salovey (2000)

Articulating what happened and illustrating it in a clear way

Works best if sequence of topics is same as that of the introduction and method sections

# DISCUSSION

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They have a typical structure

Swales and Feak (2004): typical 'moves' in the discussion sections of academic research papers:

Move 1: Restate the findings and accomplishments

Move 2: Evaluate how the result fit in with the previous findings: do they contradict, qualify, agree or go beyond them?

Move 3: List potential limitations to the study

Move 4: Offer an interpretation/explanation of these results and ward off counter-claims

Move 5: State implications and recommend further research