

CONSTRUCTING A RESEARCH ARTICLE (RA)



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WHAT ARE THE **CONVENTIONAL SECTIONS**
OF A RESEARCH ARTICLE (RA)?

ANSWER

THE STANDARD PATTERN IS “TAIMRaD”, i.e.

- **TITLE**
- **ABSTRACT**
- **INTRODUCTION**
- **METHODS**
- **RESULTS**

and

- **DISCUSSION**

PURPOSES OF RA SECTIONS

As the RA in English has developed over the last hundred years or so, the four main sections (IMRD) have become identified with **four different purposes**.

What are they?

PURPOSES OF INTRODUCTIONS

1. **Main** purpose: to provide the rationale for the paper (general to specific movement)
2. **Secondary** purpose: to attract interest in the topic – and hence readers.

PURPOSE OF METHODS

- To describe methodology, materials/subjects, and procedures (very specific)

PURPOSE OF RESULTS

- To describe the findings with commentary (very specific).

PURPOSES OF DISCUSSION

- To interpret the results in a variety of ways
- To refer to statements (hypothesis, research questions, etc.) made in the introduction (specific to general movement).

RA INTRODUCTIONS

EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS:

- should appropriately **situate** the work within the existing body of related research (**how?**)
- should attempt to **attract** the audience (**why?**)

ANSWER

- Related research should be mentioned **VIA CITATIONS**
- Introduction should attract the readers so that they continue reading. Thus, researchers / authors win **ACCEPTANCE** and **RECOGNITION** of their findings

“COMPETITION” METAPHOR FROM ECOLOGY

“Just as plants compete for light and space, so writers of RAs compete for acceptance and recognition.”

What **organizational pattern** is, as a rule, employed in introductions to RAs as researchers compete for readers and research space?

ANSWER

The rhetorical pattern has become known as the



CARS

What does **CARS** stand for?



PROFESSOR JOHN SWALES’ “CARS” MODEL (1990)

CREATE A RESEARCH SPACE

- 1. Establish the significance and centrality of the research area.**
- 2. Selectively summarize previous and current research.**
- 3. Establish the need for your own study (the “gap” statement)**
- 4. Present your work – purpose, strategy, etc.**

MOVE 1: CLAIMING CENTRALITY

In this move, certain fixed phrases or their variants tend to recur.

1. Can you think of any?

2. Which tense is typically used?

ANSWER

The present perfect or present simple are often used.

TYPICAL PHRASES:

...has been extensively studied...

...there has been growing interest in...

Recent studies have focused on...

It is generally accepted that...

A major current focus in microbiology is...

MOVE 2: SUMMARIZING RESEARCH

Note that citations can occur anywhere in an introduction...

What is the role and purpose of citations in academic texts?

ANSWER

The role and purpose of citations:

- Acknowledging the intellectual property rights of earlier authors
- Showing respect for previous scholars
- Giving your arguments greater authority
- Helping (promoting) your friends and colleagues
- Showing that you are a member of a particular disciplinary community.

SELF-CITATIONS

- What's your view on **self-citations** (citations to an author's own previously published or presented work)?

CITATIONS AND TENSE USAGE

Which tenses are typically used in citing statements?

ANSWER

There are three patterns:

1. PAST – researcher activity as agent

Huang (2007) investigated the causes of airport delays.

2. PRESENT PERFECT – researcher activity not as agent

The causes of airport delays have been widely investigated (Hyon, 2004; Huang, 2007).

3. PRESENT – no reference to research activity

The causes of airport delays are complex (Hyon, 2004; Huang, 2007)

MOVE 3: ESTABLISHING THE GAP

OPTIONS (from stronger to weaker claims):

1. Something is **wrong** (COUNTER-CLAIMING)
2. Something is **missing** (INDICATING A GAP)
3. Something is **unclear** (RAISING A QUESTION)
4. **Adding** something (CONTINUING A TRADITION)

LANGUAGE TO INDICATE A GAP

What language is typically used to indicate a gap/problem/criticism?

ANSWER

NON-COUNT:

However, little information...

Little attention has been paid to...

COUNT:

However, few studies...

Few investigations have been carried out...

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Explain the difference between

1. There is little research...
2. There is a little research...
3. Few investigations...
4. A few investigations...

MOVE 4: PRESENTING WORK

- **PURPOSIVE:** authors indicate their main purpose or purposes.

The aim of the present paper is to give...

- **DESCRIPTIVE:** authors describe the main feature of their research

In this paper we give preliminary results for...

Think about how to best link the introduction with the conclusion.

