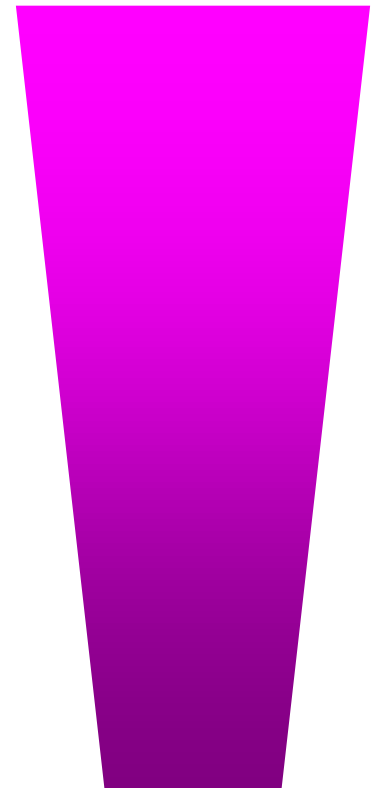# Getting Started with…
Your literature review

Prof Anne White

With thanks to Dr Ming Wai Wan

for some of the slides

What makes a good literature review?

➢ From **global** to the **specific**

➢ Start by the importance of the area

➢ Then place your research in context

➢ Then highlight gap(s) in knowledge…

➢ Leading to research questions and/or hypotheses

➢ Your aims and objectives

First make a contents page!

Titles	Pages
• Introduction	2
• Topic 1	3
• Sub topic 1	
• Sub sub topic	
• Sub topic 2	
• Sub Topic 3	
• Topic 2	2
• Sub topic 1	
• Sub topic 2	
• Topic 3	1.5
• Sub topic 1	
• Sub topic 2	
• Sub Topic 3	
• Issues and unanswered Questions	1
• Hypothesis/Aims /Objectives	1.5

Contents Page

- Good headings are essential

1. **Heading**
1.1 Sub Heading
1.1.1 Sub Sub Head

- Plan until you know the topic for each paragraph

- Decide where you could add figures & tables

- Add figures to content page and allow 1/2 page

- Then make a note not to write what is in the figure but just refer to it.

- Remember how difficult it is to read full pages of text

- Show both Supervisors and **DISCUSS BEFORE WRITING**

What goes in each section of a literature review?

Introduction

- OVERALL-The state of knowledge leading to your project

- Start off simple and outline the BIG PICTURE
- Give references for all statements
- Critically discuss previous work
- Discuss controversies and unanswered questions
- Discuss species, methods used if relevant
- Define hypotheses and aims

Techniques to help you with overall structure

- Mind maps

- Concept maps

- Brainstorming

- Post it notes

- Index cards
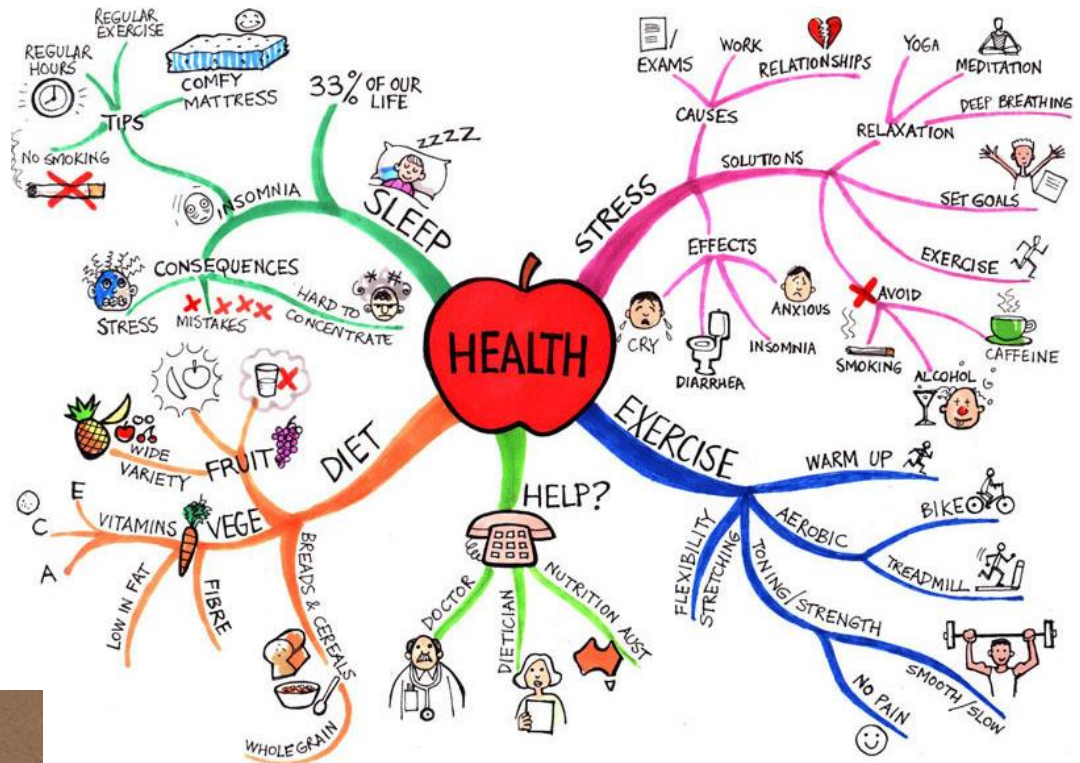
Reading the literature…

Where from?
- Pubmed or equivalent
- Key word search
- Ask supervisor for Top 10 refs

Read ref and Group your info
- Keep a note of the ref

Recording Reference
Use Endnote/Reference manager
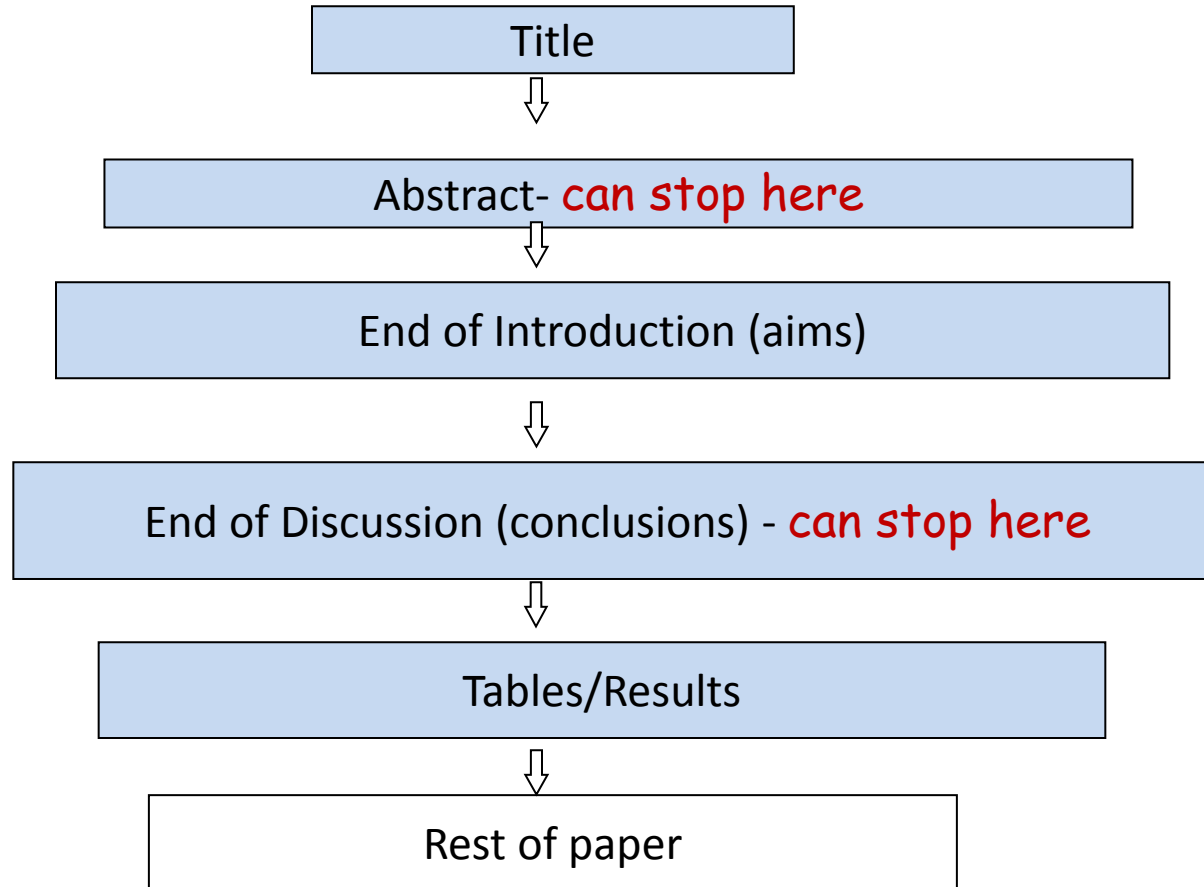-save all refs in this format

Harvard System
 Author(s), date, title, journal, ref

Alphabetical
 Scientist, A. 2015, Nature, 250, 27-35

Reading a Paper - Shortcuts

Title

⇩

Abstract- can stop here

⇩

End of Introduction (aims)

⇩

End of Discussion (conclusions) - can stop here

⇩

Tables/Results

⇩

Rest of paper

Do's and Don'ts

- Don't start with the introduction

- Start with a Section that has straightforward facts

- Write and don't be tempted to check a reference-just put (Need to find…)

- It takes a lot of space to explain background so you may not have room for details in references

- If you read the reference you will add lots of detail and it will take a long time and you will look for other references for specifics
  - -3 hours later you won't have written your paragraph!!

- If you write too much and cut bits out –your supervisor will read it as disjointed.

Do's and Don'ts

- Do keep going back to your contents page

- Use it to stop bad habits creeping in

- Do start your abstract first and keep modifying-a polished abstract is worth a lot
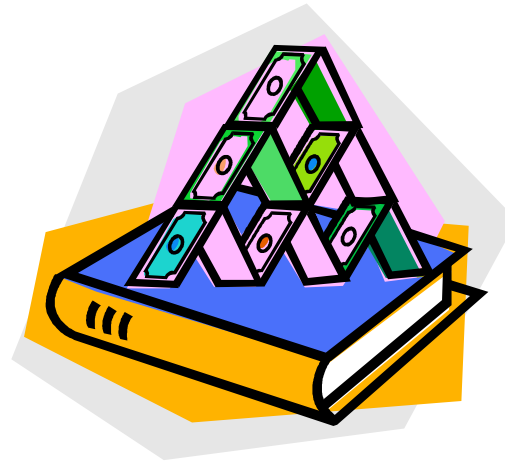
Before you start

- Check the guidelines <u>first</u>:

    – How many pages

    – Font

    – Format of references etc

    – Does it need a contents page?

Essentials of a good paragraph

Unity

all sentences directly
support one topic

Coherence

information is well-organised,
logically ordered
easy to follow

Difference between Aim and Objective?

Aim

- An intention or aspiration;-   what you hope to achieve
- Aims are statements of intent:-   written in broad terms

Objective

- A goal or step on the way to meeting the aim;- how you will achieve it
- Objectives use specific statements which define measurable outcomes.

Objectives should be S.M.A.R.T

- **Specific** – be precise about what you are going to do
- **Measurable** – you will know when you have reached your goal
- **Achievable** – Don't attempt too much. A less ambitious but completed objective is better
- **Realistic** – do you have the necessary resources to achieve the objective?
- **Time constrained** – determine when each stage needs to be completed.

5 most common specific errors in academic writing

1. Imprecise referencing to previous sentences: 'This', 'These', 'It is' etc. – Try to avoid these.
2. Reading like a textbook
3. Colloquialisms, non-formal writing
4. Lack of explicitness ('It is important…' –but not clear why!)
5. Redundancy of material (e.g. repetitiveness)

…And do use references to support <u>ALL</u> your assertions!

Tips:
➢ Thoroughly examine the introductions of studies in good publications in your field.

➢ If English is your second language, consider having it professionally proof-read at an early stage to benefit your learning.

A closing thought……

Writing reports is like driving
- You think you can do it without instruction
- The results are often abominable
- Even the novice thinks they are good at it

BUT

- You get better at it the older you get
- There are lots of people to give you advice
- It can be fun or help your career prospects- when you get it right