

Getting Started with... *Your literature review*

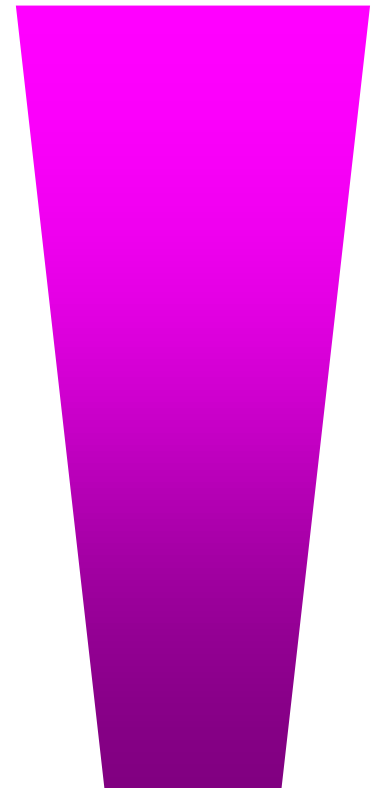
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With thanks to Dr Ming Wai Wan
for some of the slides



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
- 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**

1. Heading

1.1 Sub Heading

1.1.1 Sub Sub Head

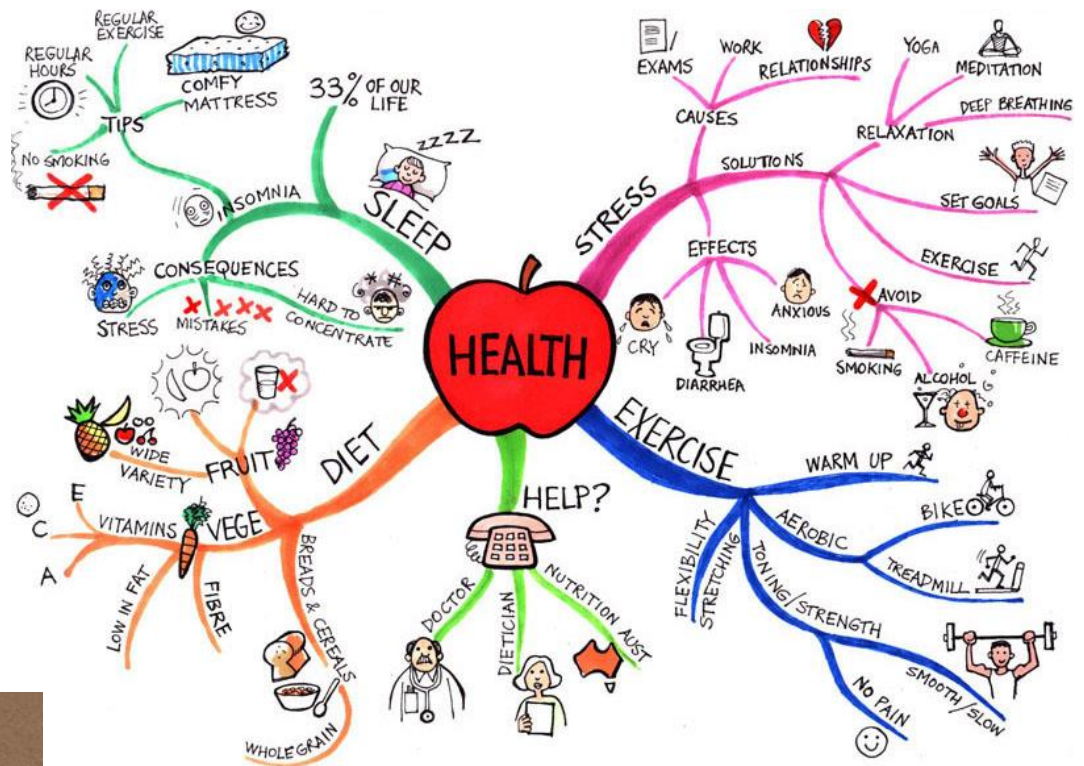
What goes in each section of a Literature report?

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
- Beware wikipedia!

Read refs and Group your info

- **Keep a note of the ref**

Recording Reference

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

Harvard System

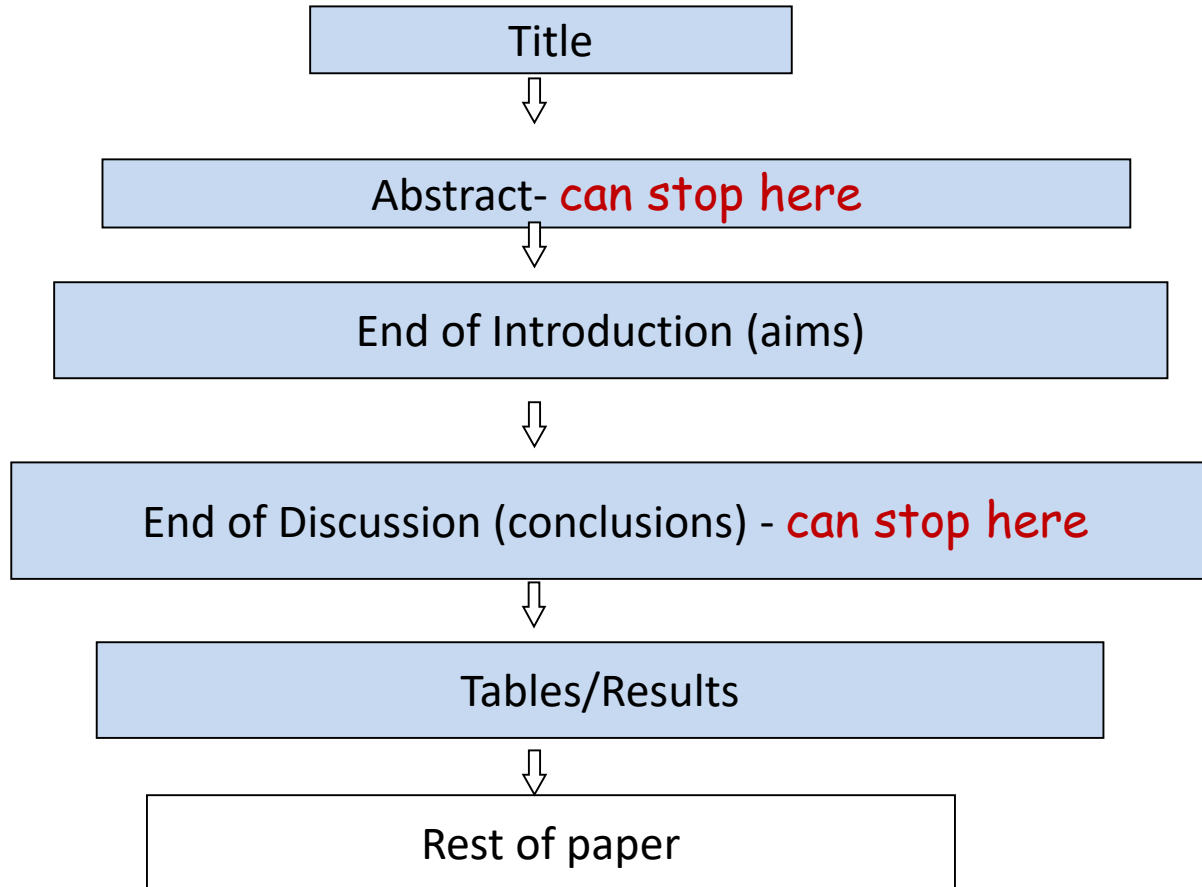
Author(s), date, title, journal, ref

Alphabetical

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



Reading a Paper - Shortcuts



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



DONT's

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 first:
 - 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 ALL 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 (or sex)

- 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