



Mittuniversitetet
MID SWEDEN UNIVERSITY

Academic Writing

Introduction for International Students

Mattias Sjöqvist & Anna-Karin Enqvist, University Library and Student Support.



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Purpose

Science has three principal functions:

- to create new knowledge
- to criticize existing knowledge
- to examine how knowledge from one field can be of use in others.



Purpose, cont.

Your work will fall under one—or perhaps more than one—of the categories mentioned previously. Your academic writing is a contribution to the ongoing scientific discussion within your chosen field.



IMRaD

This structure is the most widely used, and it is often required.

- Introduction – Why did you research this topic? To what purpose? What research question was asked in the study, and what hypothesis did you test?
- Method – How was the study conducted? What did you use?
- Results – What did you find? What was the answer to your research question. Was your hypothesis correct?
- Discussion – If correct, what is the significance of your results? Does it contradict or confirm what others have found? What possible future research seems relevant?



Introduction

This is where you present the significance of your writing – why is your subject of interest or importance?

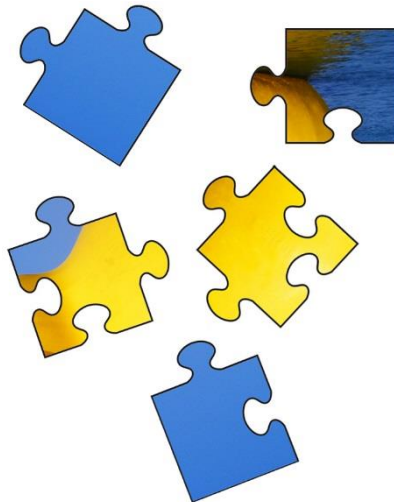
This section should point out and explain what is known, but also what is still uncertain. It should raise relevant questions and make suitable comparisons. Everything that you include in the introduction must be linked with your research question.

How to write the introduction varies between the different fields, but it should always be brief and free from irrelevant information.



Methods

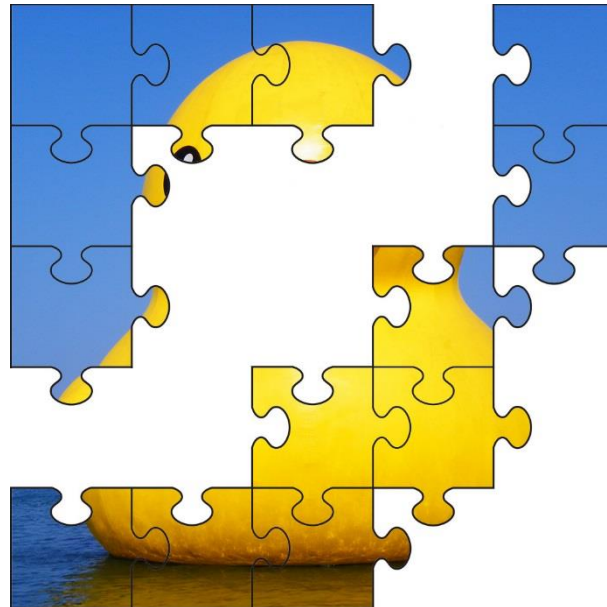
Your description of the method (i.e. *what* you have done and *why*) is of importance for the credibility of your study. This is where you reconnect to your aim and research questions as well as accounting for other possible method choices prior to presenting your own.





Results

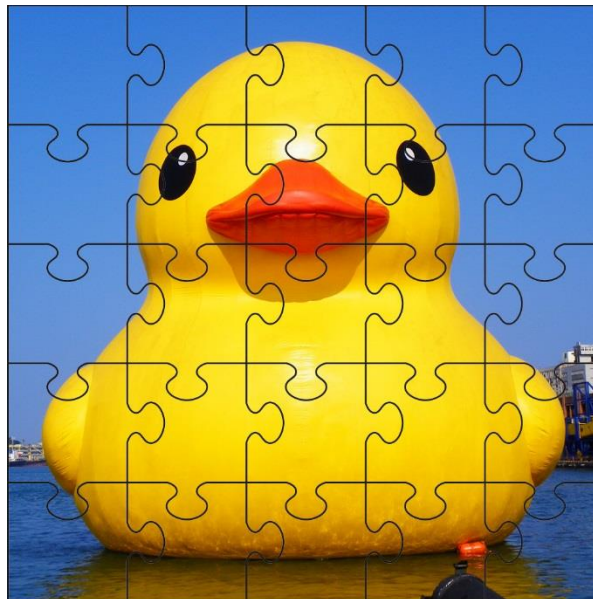
This is where you present the empirical evidence (e.g. your findings) and analyse this material.





Discussion

The research question, method and results are interconnected in the discussion section. This is where you are allowed to draw personal conclusions from your research and to interpret and assess the results. The discussion requires a clear connection to the aim and objective of the study.





Plagiarism

Presenting the works of others as your own is not allowed. Copying sentences or paragraphs without proper citation or using images, diagrams or code without permission can—at worst—result in suspension.

According to Section 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance:

A suspension decision means that the student is prohibited from participating in instruction, tests or other activities within the framework of the courses and study programmes at the higher education institution. The decision shall comprise one or more periods, but shall not exceed six months in total.



How to avoid plagiarism

- Make the difference between your own ideas and those of others visible early on in the writing process. The use of colours or brackets as source markers makes this much easier.
- Use your own words. Try to make the content understandable to the reader without any obvious similarity to the source material – rewrite and shorten it.
- The referenced source material should add credibility to your own ideas, but not replace them. Ideas that are not yours must be cited.

Or, in other words:

- Expand on what has been written before – but do it in a new way.
- Rely on the knowledge of experts – but improve on it (or disagree).
- Give credit to others – but always make your own contribution.

Improve your academic writing by incorporating what you hear and read, but please use your own words – your own, unique voice.



Citation

Citation is used for attributing the work of others to the correct sources and is a requirement for intellectual honesty. Failure to do so—either deceptively or by accident—is considered plagiarism.

- Provide citation for any and all information that is not your own.
- All cited sources must also be included in the list of references.
- The styles for citing sources differ between the sciences.



Quotation

Quotes are useful if the wording of the source material is very concise, clear or characteristic. They can also make your arguments more convincing. If you use the exact words of someone else, quotation marks must be used in addition to the citation.

- The arguments made in academic writing rarely depend on the specific phrasing in the source material.
- Please note that an overuse of quotes gives the unfavourable impression that you do not understand your topic.



A checklist for your academic writing

1. Is the subject sufficiently defined?
2. Is your research question expressed in the text?
3. Do you define and discuss all central concepts?
4. Is the disposition purposeful and sensible?
5. Are the different sections in logical order?



Checklist, cont.

6. Are the sources of various claims clear?
7. Is your own opinion clearly stated?
8. Have you reached a conclusion? Is it expressed clearly?
9. Are you really doing what you have claimed to do?
10. Does your text contain any unnecessary paragraphs?

Based on Otto Kruse

(Keine Angst vor der leeren Blatt. Ohne Schriebblockaden durchs Studium, 2004).