The Academic Phrasebank is a general resource for academic writers. It makes explicit the more common phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of academic writing.

Academic Phrasebank

A compendium of commonly used phrasal elements in academic English in PDF format

2015 enhanced edition

Personal Copy

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Preface

The Academic Phrasebank is a general resource for academic writers. It aims to provide the phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of academic writing organised according to the main sections of a research paper or dissertation. Other phrases are listed under the more general communicative functions of academic writing.

The resource was designed primarily for academic and scientific writers who are non-native speakers of English. However, native writers may still find much of the material helpful. In fact, recent data suggests that the majority of users are native speakers of English.

The phrases, and the headings under which they are listed, can be used simply to assist you in thinking about the content and organisation of your own writing, or the phrases can be incorporated into your writing where this is appropriate. In most cases, a certain amount of creativity and adaptation will be necessary when a phrase is used.

The Academic Phrasebank is not discipline specific. Nevertheless, it should be particularly useful for writers who need to report their empirical studies. The phrases are content neutral and generic in nature; in using them, therefore, you are not stealing other people's ideas and this does not constitute plagiarism.

Most of the phrases in this compendium have been organised according to the main sections of a research report. However, it is an over-simplification to associate the phrases only with the section in which they have been placed here. In reality, for example, many of phrases used for referring to other literature may be found throughout a research report.

In the current PDF version, additional material, which is not phraseological, has been incorporated. These additional sections should be helpful to you as a writer.

Contents

About Academic Phrasebank

Theoretical Influences

The Academic Phrasebank largely draws on an approach to analysing academic texts originally pioneered by John Swales in the 1980s. Utilising a genre analysis approach to identify rhetorical patterns in the introductions to research articles, Swales defined a 'move' as a section of text that serves a specific communicative function (Swales, 1981,1990). This unit of rhetorical analysis is used as one of the main organising sub-categories of the Academic Phrasebank. Swales not only identified commonly-used moves in article introductions, but he was interested in showing the kind of language which was used to achieve the communicative purpose of each move. Much of this language was phraseological in nature.

The resource also draws upon psycholinguistic insights into how language is learnt and produced. It is now accepted that much of the language we use is phraseological in nature; that it is acquired, stored and retrieved as pre-formulated constructions (Bolinger, 1976; Pawley and Syder, 1983). These insights began to be supported empirically as computer technology permitted the identification of recurrent phraseological patterns in very large corpora of spoken and written English using specialised software (e.g. Sinclair, 1991). Phrasebank recognises that there is an important phraseological dimension to academic language and attempts to make examples of this explicit.

Sources of the phrases

The vast majority of phrases in this resource have been taken from authentic academic sources. The original corpus from which the phrases were 'harvested' consisted of 100 postgraduate dissertations completed at the University of Manchester. However, phrases from academic articles drawn from a broad spectrum of disciplines have also been, and continue to be, incorporated. In most cases, the phrases have been simplified and where necessary they have been 'sifted' from their particularised academic content. Where content words have been included for exemplificatory purposes, these are substitutions of the original words. In selecting a phrase for inclusion into the Academic Phrasebank, the following questions are asked:

- does it serve a useful communicative purpose in academic text?
- does it contain collocational and/or formulaic elements?
- are the content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) generic in nature?
- does the combination 'sound natural' to a native speaker or writer of English?

When is it acceptable to reuse phrases in academic writing?

In a recent study (Davis and Morley, 2015), 45 academics from two British universities were surveyed to determine whether reusing phrases was a legitimate activity for academic writers, and if so, what kind of phrases could be reused. From the survey and later from in-depth interviews, the following characteristics for acceptability emerged. A reused phrase:

- should not have a unique or original construction;
- should not express a clear point of view of another writer;
- depending on the phrase, may be up to nine words in length; beyond this 'acceptability' declines;
- may contain up to four generic content words (nouns, verbs or adjectives which are not bound to a specific topic).

Some of the entries in the Academic Phrasebank, contain specific content words which have been included for illustrative purposes. These words should be substituted when the phrases are used. In the phrases below, for example, the content words in bold should be substituted:

- X is a major **public health** problem, and the cause of ...
- X is the leading cause of death in **western-industrialised countries**.

The many thousands of disciplinary-specific phrases which can be found in academic communication comprise a separate category of phrases. These tend to be shorter than the generic phrases listed in Academic Phrasebank, and typically consist of noun phrases or combinations of these. Acceptability for reusing these is determined by the extent to which they are used and understood by members of a particular academic community.

Further work

Development of the website content is ongoing. In addition, research is currently being carried out on the ways in which experienced and less-experienced writers make use of the Academic Phrasebank. Another project is seeking to find out more about ways in which teachers of English for academic purposes make use of this resource.

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Major sections

Writing Introductions

There are many ways to introduce an academic essay or short paper. Most academic writers, however, appear to do one or more of the following in their introductions:

- establish the context, background and/or importance of the topic
- indicate an issue, problem, or controversy in the field of study
- define the topic or key terms
- state of the purpose of the essay or piece of writing
- provide an overview of the coverage and/or structure of the writing

Introductions to research articles and dissertations tend to be relatively short but quite complex. Some of the more common moves include:

- establishing the context, background and/or importance of the topic
- giving a brief synopsis of the relevant literature
- indicating a problem, controversy or a knowledge gap in the field of study
- establishing the desirability of the research
- listing the research questions or hypotheses
- providing a synopsis of the research method(s)
- explaining the significance or value of the study
- defining certain key terms
- providing an overview of the dissertation or report structure
- explaining reasons for the writer's personal interest in the topic

Examples of phrases which are commonly employed to realise these functions are listed below. Note that there may be a certain amount of overlap between some of the categories under which the phrases are listed.

Establishing the importance of the topic for the world or society

X is fundamental to …
X has a pivotal role in …
X is frequently prescribed for …
X is fast becoming a key instrument in ...
X plays a vital role in the metabolism of …
X plays a critical role in the maintenance of …
Xs have emerged as powerful platforms for …
X is essential for a wide range of technologies.
X can play an important role in addressing the issue of …
Xs are the most potent anti-inflammatory agents known.
There is evidence that X plays a crucial role in regulating …
X is a common condition which has considerable impact on …
In the new global economy, X has become a central issue for ...
Evidence suggests that X is among the most important factors for …
X is important for a wide range of scientific and industrial processes.
Xs are one of the most widely used groups of antibacterial agents and …
There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of …
X is an important component in the climate system, and plays a key role in Y.
In the history of development economics, X has been thought of as a key factor in …
Xs are one of the most widely used groups of Y and have been extensively used for …

Establishing the importance of the topic for the discipline

A key aspect of X is …
X is of interest because …
X is a classic problem in …
A primary concern of X is …
X is a dominant feature of …
X is an important aspect of …
X is a fundamental property of …
The concepts of X and Y are central to …
X is at the heart of our understanding of …
Investigating X is a continuing concern within …
X is a major area of interest within the field of …
X has been studied by many researchers using …
X has been an object of research since the 1960s.
X has been the subject of many classic studies in …
X has been instrumental in our understanding of …
The theory of X provides a useful account of how …
Central to the entire discipline of X is the concept of …
X is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics.
The issue of X has received considerable critical attention.
X has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields.
One of the most significant current discussions in legal and moral philosophy is …
The discovery of X in 1986 triggered a huge amount of innovative scientific inquiry.

Establishing the importance of the topic (time frame given)

Recently, there has been renewed interest in …
Traditionally, Xs have subscribed to the belief that …
One of the most important events of the 1970s was …
In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in …
Recent developments in X have heightened the need for …
The last two decades have seen a growing trend towards …
Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in ...
Over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in …
Recent trends in X have led to a proliferation of studies that ...
X proved an important literary genre in the early Y community.
The past decade has seen the rapid development of X in many …
Since it was reported in 2005, X has been attracting a lot of interest.
Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the theme of …
Recent developments in the field of X have led to a renewed interest in …
The past thirty years have seen increasingly rapid advances in the field of …
The changes experienced by X over the past decade remain unprecedented.
In light of recent events in X, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of …

Highlighting an important problem

One of the main obstacles …
One of the greatest challenges …
A key issue is the safe disposal of …
The main disadvantage of X is that …
X is associated with increased risk of …
X is a common disorder characterised by …
It is now well established that X can impair …
X is a common, chronic disease of childhood.
X has led to the declines in the populations of …
X is a growing public health concern worldwide.
X is one of the most frequently stated problems with …
The main challenge faced by many experiments is the …
Lack of X has existed as a health problem for many years.
X is a major public health problem, and the main cause of …
Xs are one of the most rapidly declining groups of insects in ...
X is the leading cause of death in western-industrialised countries.
Despite its long clinical success, X has a number of problems in use.
Exposure to X has been shown to be related to adverse effects in …
There is increasing concern that some Xs are being disadvantaged …
There is an urgent need to address the safety problems caused by …
Questions have been raised about the safety of the prolonged use of …
The prevalence of X is increasing at an alarming rate in all age groups.
Despite its safety and efficacy, X suffers from several major drawbacks:
Along with this growth in X, however, there is increasing concern over …
X is increasingly recognised as a serious, worldwide public health concern.
X and its consequences are an important, but understudied, cause for concern.

(However,)	X may cause … X is limited by … X suffers from … X is too expensive to be used for … X has accentuated the problem of … the performance of X is limited by … X could be a contributing factor to … the synthesis of X remains a major challenge. X can be extremely harmful to human beings. research has consistently shown that X lacks … a major problem with this kind of application is … the determination of X is technically challenging. current methods of X have proven to be unreliable. these rapid changes are having a serious effect on … X can be adversely affected under certain conditions. observations have indicated a serious decline in the population of …

Synopsis of literature

Recent evidence suggests that …
Previous studies have reported …
Several studies have documented …
Studies of X show the importance of …
Several attempts have been made to …
A number of researchers have reported ...
Recent work by historians has established that …
Previous research comparing X and Y has found …
Existing research recognizes the critical role played by …
Recently investigators have examined the effects of X on Y.
Surveys such as that conducted by Smith (1988) showed that …
Factors found to be influencing X have been explored in several studies.
Studies over the past two decades have provided important information on …
A considerable amount of literature has been published on X. These studies …
In the past two decades, a number of researchers have sought to determine …
The first serious discussions and analyses of X emerged during the 1970s with …
There have been a number of longitudinal studies involving X that have reported …
Xs were reported in the first studies of Y (e.g., Smith, 1977; Smith and Patel, 1977).
What we know about X is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how …
Smith (1984: 217) shows how, in the past, research into X was mainly concerned with …
Results from earlier studies demonstrate a strong and consistent association between ….

It has been	noted that … argued that … shown that … reported that … assumed that … suggested that … established that … demonstrated that …. conclusively shown that …

What we know about X is largely based on	accounts by … laboratory studies. historical data from … epidemiological studies. brief biographical details. cross-sectional studies of … studies of people living in ... case studies undertaken in … contemporary textual sources. small-scale experiments with … research using laboratory animals. research undertaken in major cities. a few primary sources from the time. studies conducted in populations of X.

Highlighting a controversy in the field of study

A much debated question is whether …
One major issue in early X research concerned ...
To date there has been little agreement on what ...
The issue has grown in importance in light of recent ...
In the literature on X, the relative importance of Y is debated.
One observer has already drawn attention to the paradox in ...
Questions have been raised about the use of animal subjects in ...
In many Xs, a debate is taking place between Ys and Zs concerning ...
Debate continues about the best strategies for the management of ...
This concept has recently been challenged by X studies demonstrating ...
The debate about X has gained fresh prominence with many arguing that ...
Scholars have long debated the impact of X on the creation and diffusion of …
More recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings about ...
One of the most significant current discussions in legal and moral philosophy is ...
One major theoretical issue that has dominated the field for many years concerns ...
The controversy about scientific evidence for X has raged unabated for over a century.
The issue of X has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of ...
The causes of X have been the subject of intense debate within the scientific community.
In the literature on X, the relative importance of Y has been subject to considerable discussion.

General reference to previous research or scholarship: highlighting paucity of research

There is little published data on …
No previous study has investigated X .
The use of X has not been investigated.
There has been no detailed investigation of …
There has been little quantitative analysis of ...
Data about the efficacy and safety of X are limited.
Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to ...
A search of the literature revealed few studies which …
The impact of X on Y is understudied, particularly for …
Few studies have investigated X in any systematic way …
So far, very little attention has been paid to the role of X
So far, however, there has been little discussion about ...
In addition, no research has been found that surveyed ...
Surprisingly, the effects of X have not been closely examined.
Surprisingly, X is seldom studied and it is unclear to what extent …
In contrast to X, there is much less information about effects of …
X has hitherto received scant attention by scholars of the Y period.
A systematic understanding of how X contributes to Y is still lacking.
Despite the importance of X, there remains a paucity of evidence on …
There have been no controlled studies which compare differences in ...
To date, the problem has received scant attention in the research literature.
To date, there are few studies that have investigated the association between …
To date, no large-scale studies have been performed to investigate the prevalence of ….
Although studies have recognized X, research has yet to systematically investigate the effect of …
Since the publication of X forty years ago, there has only been a limited amount of original research into the history of …

To date, Surprisingly,	X	has (still) not (yet) been	closely formally empirically extensively scientifically systematically comprehensively	studied. examined. investigated.

There is a	current relative general notable surprising	paucity	of studies of well-controlled studies	investigating … describing how … that seek to identify predictors of
			of empirical research of high-quality research	in the field of … focusing specifically on … on the current prevalence of …
			of scientific literature of evidence-based literature	specifically relating to … on the experiences of … describing the impact of …

(Very) few studies have Few published studies have	explored … focused on … controlled for … examined how … compared trends in … attempted to define … examined the role of … measured X in humans. evaluated the effects of X on… assessed the implications of … examined the consequences of … actually examined the impact of … provided quantitative evidence of … systematically evaluated the use of … attempted to quantify the impact of … adequately tested the effectiveness of … addressed the long term psychological effects of … been published that specifically assess the use of ... been large enough to provide reliable estimates of … been conducted to determine the possible effects of …

Although While Whilst	some research has been carried out on X,	no single study exists which ... no studies have been found which ... no controlled studies have been reported. there is very little scientific understanding of ... only two studies have attempted to investigate ... the mechanism by which ... has not been established. there have been few empirical investigations into ...

Highlighting inadequacies or weaknesses of previous studies (also refer to *Being Critical*)
Previous studies of X have not dealt with ...
Researchers have not treated X in much detail.
Such expositions are unsatisfactory because they ...
Most studies in the field of X have only focused on ...
Such approaches, however, have failed to address …
Previous published studies are limited to local surveys.
Half of the studies evaluated failed to specify whether ...
The research to date has tended to focus on X rather than Y.
Previously published studies on the effect of X are not consistent.
Smith's analysis does not take account of ..., nor does she examine ...
The existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between X and Y.
Most studies in X have only been carried out in a small number of areas.
However, much of the research up to now has been descriptive in nature ...
The generalisability of much published research on this issue is problematic.
Research on the subject has been mostly restricted to limited comparisons of ...
However, few writers have been able to draw on any systematic research into ...
Short-term studies such as these do not necessarily show subtle changes over time …
Although extensive research has been carried out on X, no single study exists which ...
However, these results were based upon data from over 30 years ago and it is unclear if ...
The experimental data are rather controversial, and there is no general agreement about ...
However, all the previous X research was cross-sectional in design. Therefore, it is unclear if …
Some evidence suggests that ..., although further work using X is required to confirm this finding.
The focus of most of these studies has been X, whereas an association between Y and Z has received less research attention.

No previous study has	controlled for … been large enough to … completely eliminated … distinguished between … provided information on … addressed the question of … assessed the occurrence of ... used a dynamic measure of … given sufficient consideration to … employed time-series techniques for … utilised verbal reports to examine the problem of … used a method for analysing multiple factors related to …

Previous studies (of X) Most of these studies	have suffered from	small sample sizes. low response rates. multiple design flaws. an overemphasis on … inconsistent definitions. poorly developed theory. inadequate sample sizes. a lack of clarity in defining. methodological limitations. serious sampling problems. poor case control matching. experimental design errors. inadequate research design. serious methodological flaws. a high degree of sampling bias. considerable design limitations. lack of instrumental sensitivity. the use of poorly matched controls. a paucity of standardised measures. notable methodological weaknesses. fundamental flaws in research design. lack of a strong theoretical framework. an over-reliance on self-report methodology. a restricted range of methodological approaches. shortcomings in the methods used to select cases. a lack of well-grounded theoretical considerations. several conceptual and methodological weaknesses.

Previous studies (of X) Most of these studies	have	only involved … only been carried out in … only been undertaken using … only provided weak evidence for … been of poor quality. been limited in a number of ways. been limited to convenience samples. been limited to a small number of cases …

Previous studies	have failed to	consider	the impact of … the reasons for … the evidence for … the contexts in which … several key aspects of … the variable nature of … other explanations for … the complex nature of … the potential impact of … the social dimension of … the dynamic aspects of ... the underlying causes of … demographic factors that ... the ethical implications of ... the important role played by … the broader implications of how ... the unique complexities faced by ... the contextual factors that influence …

General reference to previous research or scholarship: highlighting negative outcomes

Previous studies have failed to	find show demonstrate	a link between … any treatment effect. a connection between … significant differences in … any convincing evidence of … a causal relationship between … any support for the X hypothesis. any significant advantages of using … significant changes in health outcomes ... reliable, repeatable therapeutic effects of …

Recent studies have The research to date has	not been able to	establish … confirm earlier … determine whether … show a link between … duplicate these results. reproduce these findings. replicate these associations. rule out the possibility that … provide robust evidence for … detect an increase in the risk of … confirm earlier findings showing …

Highlighting a knowledge gap in the field of study
Very little is known about X in ...
… much less is known about X.
It is still not known whether …
The nature of X remains unclear.
What is not yet clear is the impact of X on ...
The response of X to Y is not fully understood.
Causal factors leading to X remain speculative.
To date, there has been no reliable evidence that ...
The neurobiological basis of this X is poorly understood.
Little is known about X and it is not clear what factors ...
Much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between ...
To date, studies investigating X have produced equivocal results.
The evidence that X and Y are associated with Z is weak and inconclusive.
This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of X that exist among …
Some studies have shown the beneficial effects of …, but others showed a deterioration in …

To date, (however), there has been	no little	clear soild reliable definitive empirical convincing conclusive experimental	evidence that …

What is not yet	clear known understood	(however)	is the role of … is the nature of … is the importance of … is the extent to which … is the degree to which … is the actual proportion of … are the different stages of … are the circumstances that … is the actual relationship between … is the relative importance of the various factors that ...
What remains	unclear unknown		is how … is why … is whether … is precisely how … is to what degree there exists … is how different species are distributed in … is how such policies and practices affect the … is whether these brain regions are linked to ... is whether or not this finding is a true representation.

The extent to which	X influences Y X determines Y X plays a role in Y X has been successful X changes during … X presents a risk to Y X corresponds with Y X has been alleviated X has been successful in … X can be extrapolated to humans the problem of X is facilitated by Y these findings have wider relevance lack of X is causally associated with Y	is (still) remains	unclear. unknown. poorly understood.

Indicating the focus, aim, argument of a short paper
In this paper, I argue that ...
The central thesis of this paper is that ...
In the pages that follow, it will be argued that ...
In this essay, I attempt to defend the view that ...

This paper	shows that … argues that … gives an account of … discusses the case of … analyses the impact of … attempts to show that … contests the claim that … provides an overview of … reviews the evidence for … reports on a study which … addresses the question of … presents new evidence for … traces the development of … explores the ways in which … assesses the significance of … highlights the importance of … considers the implications of … evaluates the effectiveness of … critically examines the view that … proposes a new methodology for … surveys recent empirical studies on … examines the relationship between … compares the different ways in which … offers a new model for understanding … investigates the factors that determine … describes the design and implementation of … seeks to remedy these problems by analysing the literature of ...

The (primary) aim of this paper is to	review recent research into the ... explore the relationship between … propose a conceptual theoretical framework based on … provide empirical and theoretical evidence for the claim that

The aim of this paper is to	critically	analyse the effects of … examine the ways in which … review the different approaches used to … evaluate the rationale behind X's theory of … discuss the some of the prominent ideas which …

Stating the purpose of research

The specific objective of this study was to …
An objective of this study was to investigate ...
This thesis will examine the way in which the ...
This study set out to investigate the usefulness of ...
This dissertation seeks to explain the development of ...
This case study seeks to examine the changing nature of ...
The objectives of this research are to determine whether ...
This prospective study was designed to investigate the use of …
This research examines the emerging role of X in the context of ...
This study systematically reviews the data for..., aiming to provide ...
Drawing upon two stands of research into X, this study attempts to ...
This thesis intends to determine the extent to which ... and whether ...
This dissertation aims to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding ...
This study therefore set out to assess the effect of X ..., and the effect of ...
The main aim of this study is to investigate the differences between X and Y.
Part of the aim of this project is to develop software that is compatible with ...
There are two primary aims of this study: 1. To investigate ... 2. To ascertain ...
This study seeks to obtain data which will help to address these research gaps.
One purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which these factors were ...
The purpose of this investigation is to explore the relationship between X and Y.
The aim of this research project has therefore been to assess the doses and risks associated with ...

The purpose of this study is to The aim of this investigation is to	predict which … establish whether … determine whether … develop a model for … assess the effects of …

The purpose of this study is to The aim of this investigation is to	try and establish what ... better understand the … find a new method for … evaluate how effective … assess the feasibility of … test the hypothesis that … explore the influence of … clarify several aspects of ... investigate the impact of … develop an understanding of ... gain further understanding of … compare the two ways of treating … examine the relationship between … evaluate a new method of measuring … understand the views and experiences of … review in detail the available information on … describe some of the more recent developments in … shine new light on these debates through an examination of ...

Research questions or hypotheses

The hypothesis that will be tested is that ...
The research questions in this study focused on …
The central question in this dissertation asks how ...
This research seeks to address the following questions:
The key research question of this study was whether or not ...
This study aimed to address the following research questions:
The study sought to answer the following specific research questions:
In particular, this dissertation will examine six main research questions:
Another question is whether ...

Synopsis of the research design, method, source(s) of data

Data for this study were collected using ...
Five works will be examined, all of which ...
This paper uses archival data from X to study …
This investigation takes the form of a case-study ...
This study was exploratory and interpretative in nature.
This study uses a qualitative case study approach to investigate …
The research data in this thesis is drawn from four main sources: ...
The approach to empirical research adopted for this study was one of ...
This dissertation follows a case-study design, with in-depth analysis of ...
By employing qualitative modes of enquiry, I attempt to illuminate the ...
Qualitative and quantitative research designs were adopted to provide ...
Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this investigation.
A holistic approach is utilised, integrating X, Y and Z material to establish ...
The study was conducted in the form of a survey, with data being gathered via ...
The methodological approach taken in this study is a mixed methodology based on ...
A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used in the data analysis.

This study uses	recent survey archival empirical interview qualitative quantitative longitudinal observational	data from X to	assess … explore … examine … estimate … investigate …

Indicating significance or value
This research sheds new light on …
This study provides new insights into …
The study offers some important insights into ...
The present study fills a gap in the literature by …
Understanding the link between X and Y will help …
This is the first study to undertake a longitudinal analysis of ...
The present research explores, for the first time, the effects of …
The findings should make an important contribution to the field of ....
This study provides an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of ...
This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring ...
This project provided an important opportunity to advance the understanding of ...
Therefore, this study makes a major contribution to research on X by demonstrating ...
There are several important areas where this study makes an original contribution to ...

Indicating limitations
The thesis does not engage with ...
This study is unable to encompass the entire …
It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the ...
A full discussion of X lies beyond the scope of this study.
The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on ...
Another potential problem is that the scope of my thesis may be too broad.
Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of...

Giving reasons for personal Interest*
I became interested in Xs after reading ...
I have worked closely with X for many years and ...
My personal experience of X has prompted this research.
My main reason for choosing this topic is personal interest.
It is my experience of working with X that has driven this research.
This project was conceived during my time working for X. As a medical advisor, I witnessed …
* sometimes found in the humanities, and the applied human sciences

Outlining the structure
This paper begins by ... It will then go on to ...
The first section of this paper will examine...
My thesis is composed of four themed chapters.
The essay has been organised in the following way.
The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows: ...
The main issues addressed in this paper are: a), b and c).
This paper first gives a brief overview of the recent history of X.
This paper has been divided into four parts. The first part deals with ...
The overall structure of the study takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter.
Chapter Two begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, and looks at how ...
The third chapter is concerned with the methodology used for this study.
The fourth section presents the findings of the research, focusing on the three key themes that ...
Chapter 6 analyses the results of interviews and focus group discussions undertaken during ...

The main	topics issues themes periods developments	covered in this chapter are …

The final chapter The final section	gives a brief review of … draws upon the entire thesis to … identifies areas for further research. ties together the common themes and … draws together the key findings, making ... draws together these various findings, and … draws together the various strands of the thesis. summarises the main findings of this project and ... gives a brief summary and critique of the findings. brings together the lessons from these case studies, and then ... ties together up the various theoretical and empirical strands in order to ... includes a discussion of the implication of the findings to future research into …

Explaining Keywords (also refer to *Defining Terms*)
Throughout this paper, the term X will refer to ...
According to Smith (2002), X can be defined as follows: ' ... '
In this article, the abbreviation XYZ will be used to refer to ...
Throughout this dissertation, the term X will be used to refer to ...
The term X is a relatively new name for ..., commonly referred to as ...
While a variety of definitions of the term X have been suggested, this paper will use the definition first suggested by Smith (1968) who saw it as …

Referring to Literature

One of the distinguishing features of academic writing is that it is informed by what is already known, what work has been done before, and/or what ideas and models have already been developed. Thus, academic writers frequently make reference to external sources. In some cases, where the individual author is important, the author's name will be the main subject of the sentence; in other cases, the source may only be mentioned in brackets (...) or via a number notation system (e.g. footnotes and endnotes). The 'author as subject' style is less common in the empirical disciplines (sciences) and more commonly used in the humanities. The verbs and verb phrases typically used for referring to sources are listed below. Note that different referencing systems are used in different disciplines. In the examples given here, the Harvard in-text referencing system has been used.

The literature review: it is the purpose of the literature review section of a paper or dissertation to show the reader, in a systematic way, what is already known about the research topic as a whole, and to outline the key ideas and theories that help us to understand this. As well as being systematic, the review should be evaluative and critical of the studies or ideas which are relevant to the current work (refer to *Being Critical*). For example, you may think a particular study did not investigate some important aspect of the area you are researching, that the authors failed to notice a weakness in their methods, or that their conclusion is not well-supported.

A note on verb tenses: For general reference to the literature, the present perfect tense (have/has + verb + ed/en) tends to be used. For reference to specific studies carried out in the past, the simple past tense is most commonly used. This is always the case where a specific date or time in the past forms a part of the sentence. When referring to the words or ideas of writers, the present tense is often used if the ideas are still relevant, even if the author is no longer alive. The examples given below reflect these general patterns.

General descriptions of the relevant literature

Research into X has a long history.
The literature has emphasized the importance of …
Different theories exist in the literature regarding …
More recent attention has focused on the provision of ...
There are relatively few historical studies in the area of …
A great deal of previous research into X has focused on ...
A large and growing body of literature has investigated ...
Much of the current literature on X pays particular attention to ...
For many years, this phenomenon was surprisingly neglected by …
There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of ...
Over the past decade, most research in X has emphasized the use of ...
In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on ...
The generalisability of much published research on this issue is problematic.
During the past 30 years, much more information has become available on ...
A considerable amount of literature has been published on X. These studies ...
The first serious discussions and analyses of X emerged during the 1970s with ...
Historically, research investigating the factors associated with X has focused on …
What we know about X is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how ...

What we know about X is largely based upon	case clinical empirical qualitative laboratory longitudinal comparative experimental observational epidemiological	studies that investigate how ...

Reference to current state of knowledge
X is a principal determining factor of Y (Smith, 2005; Jones, 2013).
X is one of the most intense reactions following CHD (Lane, 2003).
There is an unambiguous relationship between X and Y (Rao, 1998).
X is significantly reduced during the first months of … (Smith, 2000; Jones, 2006).
X has been found to oppose the anti-inflammatory actions of Y on Z (Alourfi, 2004).
A relationship exists between an individual's working memory and their ability to ... (Jones, 2002).
GM varieties of maize are able to cross-pollinate with non-GM varieties (Smith, 1998; O'Brien, 2009).

General reference to previous research or scholarship: normally more than one author
Surveys such as that conducted by Smith (1988) have shown that ...
Traditionally, it has been argued that ... (e.g. Smith, 1960; O'Brien, 1972).
Early examples of research into X include … (Smith, 1982; O'Brien, 1984).
Twenty cohort study analyses have examined the relationship between ...
Several biographies of Brown have been published. Smith (2013) presents ...
A number of authors have considered the effects of … (Smith, 2003; Jones, 2004).
Many historians have argued that ... (e.g. Jones, 1987; Johnson, 1990; Smith, 1994).
There is a consensus among social scientists that ... (e.g. Jones, 1987; Johnson, 1990; ...
Data from several sources have identified the increased X and Y associated with obesity.
At least 120 case-control studies worldwide have examined the relationship between ...
It has been demonstrated that a high intake of X results in damage to ... (Smith, 1998; ...).
Numerous studies have attempted to explain ... (for example, Smith, 1996; Kelly, 1998; ...).
Previous research findings into X have been inconsistent and contradictory (Smith, 1996; ...).

It has been	noted that … argued that … shown that … thought that … reported that … assumed that … observed that … suggested that … established that … demonstrated that …. conclusively shown that …

Previous Several	studies of X surveys of X investigations of X	have	found … revealed … reported … identified … established … demonstrated … shown significant increases in …

To date, Thus far, Up to now,	several studies previous studies a number of studies	have	used … found … reported … shown that… indicated that … linked X with Y. suggested that … demonstrated that … tested the efficacy of … investigated the effects of… begun to examine the use of … confirmed the effectiveness of … used longitudinal data to examine … examined the association between … attempted to evaluate the impact of … revealed a correlation between X and Y. analysed the accuracy and precision of … explored the relationships between X and Y. highlighted factors that are associated with …

Several recent studies investigating X have been carried out on …
Recent evidence suggests that ... (Smith, 1996; Jones, 1999; Johnson, 2001).
In recent years, a few authors have begun to … (Smith, 1996; Jones, 1999; Johnson, 2001).
Recently, in vitro studies have shown that X can ... (Patel *et al.*, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 1998).

Recent studies have The research to date has	been	concerned with … conducted using … carried out using … largely exploratory. qualitative in nature. designed to determine whether … based on relatively small sample sizes. undertaken in a variety of healthcare settings.

General reference to previous research or scholarship: highlighting negative outcomes

Previous studies have failed to	find show demonstrate	a (any) benefit in … a (any) link between … a (any) treatment effect. a (any) adverse effect of … a (any) protective effect of … a (any) connection between … a (any) correlation between … a (any) causal relationship between … a (any) consistent association between … (any) convincing evidence of … (any) benefits associated with … (any) significant differences in … (any) support for the X hypothesis. (any) significant advantages of using … (any) significant changes in health outcomes ... (any) reliable, repeatable therapeutic effects of …

Prior studies have Recent studies have The research to date has	not been able to	establish … confirm earlier … determine whether … convincingly show that … reproduce these findings. account for all aspects of … replicate these associations. confirm earlier findings showing …

General reference to previous research or scholarship: research topic prominent

The X problem has been extensively studied.
Xs have been studied extensively in vitro, using …
X has been intensively investigated recently due to its …
Markers for the prediction of X have been widely investigated.
X has also been shown to reverse the anti-inflammatory effects of Y in …
Factors thought to be influencing X have been explored in several studies.
The geology of X has been addressed in several small-scale investigations and ...
The roles of X have been studied extensively (Jones, 1989; Johnson, 1994; Smith, 1998).
The causes of X have been widely investigated (Jones, 1987; Johnson, 1990; Smith, 1994).
X has been identified as a major contributing factor to the decline of many species of … (1).
The relationship between X and Y has been widely investigated (Smith, 1985; Jones, 1987, ...

Reference to single investigations in the past: researcher prominent

Smith (1999)	showed that reducing X to 190^{o}C decreased ... (see Figure 2) . demonstrated that when the maximum temperature is exceeded ... found that as levels of literacy and education of the population rise ...

Jones *et al.* (2001)	compared the rate of … labelled these subsets as ... measured both components of the ... used a survey to assess the various ... identified parents of disabled children as ... set up a series of virtual experiments using … examined the flow of international students ... carried out a number of investigations into the ... studied the effects of X on unprotected nerve cells. analysed the data from 72 countries and concluded that ... interviewed 250 undergraduate students using semi-structured ... performed a similar series of experiments in the 1960s to show that ... reviewed the literature from the period and found little evidence for this ... conducted a series of trials in which he mixed X with different quantities of ... investigated the differential impact of formal and non-formal education on ...

Reference to single investigations or publications in the past: time frame prominent

In 1959, a seminal article was published entitled …
In 1889, Brown performed a bilateral ablation of the …
In 1859, the publication of X had a major impact on …
In 1965, Jones published his major historic survey of …
In 1975, Smith *et al.* published a paper in which they described ...
In 1984, Jones *et al.* made several amino acid esters of X and evaluated them as ...
In 1981, Smith and co-workers demonstrated that X induced in vitro resistance to ...
In 1990, Patel *et al.* demonstrated that replacement of H2O with heavy water led to ...
In 1990, Al-Masry *et al.* reported a new and convenient synthetic procedure to obtain ...

Thirty years later, Smith (1974) reported three cases of X which ...
In the 1950s, Gunnar Myrdal pointed to some of the ways in which ...
Following World War 1, Fleming actively searched for anti-bacterial agents.
Almost 20 years ago, Jones (1985) formulated his X theory, centred around …

Reference to single investigations in the past: investigation prominent

A seminal study in this area is the work of ...
One study by Smith (2014) examined the trend in ...
A recent study by Smith and Jones (2012) involved ...
A recent systematic literature review concluded that …
A longitudinal study of X by Smith (2012) reports that ...
Preliminary work on X was undertaken by Abdul Karim (1992).
A key study comparing X and Y is that of Smith (2010), in which ...
The first systematic study of X was reported by Patel *et al.* in 1986.
Detailed examination of X by Smith and Patel (1961) showed that ...
Analysis of the genes involved in X was first carried out by Smith *et al*. (1983).
A significant analysis and discussion on the subject was presented by Smith (1988).
The study of the structural behaviour of X was first carried out by Rao *et al.* (1986).
A small scale study by Smith (2012) reached different conclusions, finding no increase in ...
The study by Jones (1990) offers probably the most comprehensive empirical analysis of …

Smith's comparative study (2012) found that ...
Jones's comprehensive review concluded that …
Brown's (1992) model of X assumes three main ...
Smith's cross-country analysis (2012) showed that ...

In an analysis of X, Smith *et al.* (2012) found ...
In a follow-up study, Smith *et al.* (2009) found that …
In an investigation into X, Smith *et al.* (2012) found ...
In a comprehensive study of X, Jones (2001) found that …
In a study conducted by Smith (1978), it was shown that …
In studies of rats given X, Smith and colleagues found that …
In another major study, Zhao (1974) found that just over half of the ...
In a study which set out to determine X, Smith (2012) found that ...
In a randomised controlled study of X, Smith (2012) reported that ...
In a large longitudinal study, Smith *et al.* (2012) investigated the incidence of X in Y.
In one well-known recent experiment, limits on X were found to be .... (Al-Masry, 2013)

Reference to single investigations in the past: research topic prominent

To determine the effects of X, Zhao *et al*. (2005) compared ...
X was originally isolated from Y in a soil sample from ... (Wang *et al.*, 1952).
The electronic spectroscopy of X was first studied by Smith and Jones in 1970.
X formed the central focus of a study by Smith (2002) in which the author found ...
X was first demonstrated experimentally by Pavlov (Smith, 2002). In his seminal study ...
The acid-catalyzed condensation reaction between X and Y was first reported by Smith in 1872
To better understand the mechanisms of X and its effects, Al-Masry (2013) analysed the ...
The way in which the X gene is regulated was studied extensively by Ho and colleagues (Ho *et al.* 1995 and 1998).

Reference to what other writers do in their text: author prominent
In Chapter 2, Smith provides us with a number of important ...
In the subsequent chapter, Smith examines the extent to which ...
By drawing on the concept of X, Smith has been able to show that ...
Some analysts (e.g. Carnoy, 2002) have attempted to draw fine distinctions between ...
Drawing on an extensive range of sources, the authors set out the different ways in which ...
Other authors (see Harbison, 2003; Kaplan, 2004) question the usefulness of such an approach.

In her review of ..., In her major study, In her analysis of ..., In her case study of …, In her introduction to ..., In her seminal article, In her classic critique of ..., In her interesting analysis of …,	Smith (2012) identifies five characteristics of ...

Smith (2013)	identifies X, Y, and Z as the major causes of ... draws on an extensive range of sources to assess ... highlights the need to break the link between X and Y. uses examples of these various techniques as evidence that ... mentions the special situation of Singapore as an example of ... questions whether mainstream schools are the best environment for ... draws our attention to distinctive categories of X often observed in ... considers whether countries work well on cross-border issues such as ... discusses the challenges and strategies for facilitating and promoting ... provides in-depth analysis of the work of Aristotle showing its relevance to ... defines evidence based medicine as the conscious, explicit and judicious use of ... lists three reasons why the English language has become so dominant. These are: ... traces the development of Japanese history and philosophy during the 19th century.

Reference to another writer's ideas or position: author prominent
As argued by Smith (2003), X is far more cost effective, and therefore ...
According to Smith (2003), preventative medicine is far more cost effective, and therefore ...

Smith (2013)	claims argues maintains concludes suggests points out	that	preventative medicine is far more cost effective, and therefore better adapted to the developing world.

Smith (2013)	offers argues for proposes suggests	an explanatory theory for each type of ….

Synthesising sources: supporting
Similarly, Nicoladis (2006) found that X ...
In the same vein, Smith (1994) in his book XYZ notes ...
This view is supported by Jones (2000) who writes that ...
Smith argues that her data support O'Brien's (1988) view that ...
Al-Masry's (1986) work on X is complemented by Smith's (2009) study of ...
Almost every paper that has been written on X includes a section relating to ...

Smith argues that ... Al-Masry (2003) sees X as ...	Similarly, Jones (2013) asserts that ... Likewise, Wang (2012) holds the view that ... In the same vein, Smith (1994) in his book XYZ notes ...

Synthesising sources: contrasting
Other studies have concluded that …
Unlike Smith, Jones (2013) argues that ...
In contrast to Smith, Jones (2013) argues that ...
A broader perspective has been adopted by Smith (213) who argues that ...
Conversely, Wang (2010) reported no significant difference in mortality between X and Y.

Smith (2010) presents an X account, whilst Jones (2011) ... While Smith (2008) focusses on X, Jones (2009) is more concerned with ...

Some writers (e.g. Smith, 2002) have attempted to draw fine distinctions between ...	Others (see Jones, 2003; Brown, 2004) question the usefulness of ...

Some authors have mainly been interested in questions concerning X (Smith, 2001; Jones ...)	Others have highlighted the relevance of …

Contrasting sources with 'however' for emphasis

Much of the available literature on X deals with the question of ...	However, Smith (2008) is much more concerned with ...
According to some studies, X is represented as … (Smith, 2012; Davis, 2014)	However, others propose … (Jones, 2014; Brown, 2015)
Smith (2013) found that X accounted for approximately 30% of Y.	Other researchers, however, who have looked at X, have found ... Jones (2010), for example, ...
Zhao (2002) reports that ...	Jennings' (2010) study of Y, however, found little evidence of ...

Some ways of introducing quotations

Commenting on X, Smith (2003) argues: '... ...'
As Carnoy (2004: 215) states: 'there are many good reasons to be sceptical'.
As Smith argues: 'In the past, the purpose of education was to ...' (Smith, 2000:150).
In the final part of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx writes: 'Philosophers have hitherto only …'
Sachs concludes: 'The idea of development stands today like a ruin in …' (Sachs, 1992a: 156).

As Smith	notes: '... ... ... ' argues: '... ... ... writes: '... ... ... ' observes: '... ... ... ' points out: '... ... ... ' reminds us: '... ... ... '	(Smith 2003: 23).

Summarising the review or parts of the review

Together, these studies indicate that ...
Overall, these studies highlight the need for ...
Considering all of this evidence, it seems that ...
Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for…
The evidence presented in this section suggests that ...
The studies presented thus far provide evidence that ...
Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that ...
Together these studies provide important insights into the ...
All of the studies reviewed here support the hypothesis that …
Two important themes emerge from the studies discussed so far:
In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that ...

Overall, these studies	suggest that … suggest the efficacy of … suggest an inverse association between … suggest that the self-report method possesses ... suggest that both X and Y play a role in the development of …
	illustrate how … illustrate the role of … illustrate the flexibility of … illustrate the heterogeneity of … illustrate just how important X is in …
	highlight the need for ... highlight the complexity of … highlight the positive aspects of … highlight the beneficial effects of … highlight the unique relationship between …
	indicate a link between … consistently indicate that … clearly indicate the importance of … indicate that Xs are often important predictors of … indicate that the X has only a slight impact, if any, on …
	provide mixed evidence for … provide converging evidence for … provide evidence for the usefulness of … provide strong evidence for the efficacy of ... provide reasonably consistent evidence of an association between ...
	show weak evidence of ... show that Xs may serve as important ... show a modest correlation between X and Y. show that X is caused by a complex system of … show that a change from X to Y is usually associated with …

Describing Methods

In the Methods section of a dissertation or research article, writers give an account of how they carried out their research. The Methods section should be clear and detailed enough for another experienced person to repeat the research and reproduce the results. Where the methods chosen are new, unfamiliar or perhaps even controversial, or where the intended audience is from many disciplines, the Methods section will tend to be much more extensive. Typical stretches of text found in this section of a research article or dissertation along with examples of the kind of language used for these are listed below. Note that for many of the functional categories in this section, the verbs are written in the simple past tense. Most of the verbs are also in the passive form.

Describing previously used methods

Many historians have utilized X to measure …
Traditionally, X has been assessed by measuring ...
X is the main non-invasive method used to determine ...
Different authors have measured X in a variety of ways.
Previous studies have based their criteria for selection on ...
Recent advances in X methods have facilitated investigation of …
Recently, simpler and more rapid tests of X have been developed.
In most recent studies, X has been measured in four different ways.
The use of qualitative case studies is a well-established approach in ...
Case studies have been long established in X to present detailed analysis of ...
This test is widely available and has been used in many investigational studies.
To date, various methods have been developed and introduced to measure X.
In recent years, two different approaches have attempted to account for the …
A variety of methods are used to assess X. Each has its advantages and drawbacks.

Giving reasons why a particular method was adopted

A major advantage of X is that …
X based methods provide a means of …
A case study approach was used to allow a ...
This method is particularly useful in studying ...
A quantitative approach was employed since ...
Qualitative methods offer an effective way of ...
The design of the questionnaires was based on ...
The X method is one of the more practical ways of ...
The semi-structured approach was chosen because ...
The advantages of Xs are that they are simple to deliver.
The X approach has a number of attractive features: ...
For this study, the X was used to explore the subsurface ...
The second advantage of using the multivariate method is ...
The study uses qualitative analysis in order to gain insights into ...
One advantage of the X analysis is that it avoids the problem of ...
Smith *et al.* (1994) identify several advantages of the case study ...
Another advantage of using computer simulations is that it allows …
It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was to ...
Qualitative methods can be more useful for identifying and characterising …
It was considered that quantitative measures would usefully supplement and extend the ...
Many of the distributions were not normal so non-parametric signed rank tests were run.
The sensitivity of the X technique has been demonstrated in a report by Smith *et al.* (2011).

A case-study approach was	used chosen adopted	to ensure that … to help understand how … to allow a deeper insight into … to conduct this exploratory study. to evaluate the effectiveness of … to determine the factors that affect ... to gain a detailed understanding of … to assess the management practices of … to obtain further in-depth information on the ... to provide rounded, detailed illustrations of the … to capture the complexities of the phenomenon.

Giving reasons why a particular method was rejected
A major problem with the experimental method is that ...
The main disadvantage of the experimental method is that ...
However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of ...
However, this method clearly is not valid for analysing long-term trends in …
There are certain problems with the use of focus groups. One of these is that there is less ...

Indicating a specific method
X was prepared according to the procedure used by Patel *et al.* (1957).
The synthesis of X was done according to the procedure of Smith (1973).
X was synthesised using the same method that was detailed for Y, using ...
Samples were analysed for X as previously reported by Smith *et al.* (2012).
Analysis was based on the conceptual framework proposed by Smith *et al*. (2002).
This compound was prepared by adapting the procedure used by Zhao *et al.* (1990).

Describing the characteristics of the sample
The cohort was divided into two groups according to ...
A random sample of patients with ... was recruited from ...
Articles were searched from January 1965 until April 2014.
Forty-seven students studying X were recruited for this study.
A systematic literature review was conducted of studies that ...
Just over half the sample (53%) was female, of whom 69% were ...
Of the initial cohort of 123 students, 66 were female and 57 male.
Only children aged between 10 and 15 years were included in the study.
Eligible women who matched the selection criteria were identified by …
The participants were divided into two groups based on their performance on ...
Two groups of subjects were interviewed, namely X and Y. The first group were ...
The project used a convenience sample of 32 first year modern languages students.
All of the participants were aged between 18 and 19 at the beginning of the study...
All studies described as using some sort of X procedure were included in the analysis.
Participants were recruited from 15 clinics across ..., covering urban and rural areas ...
The initial sample consisted of 200 students, 75 of whom belonged to minority groups.
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 male offenders with a mean age of 38 years.

Indicating criteria for selection or inclusion
Criteria for selecting the subjects were as follows:
Publications were only included in the analysis if ….
To identify X, the following parameters were used …
The area of study was chosen for its relatively small ...
Primary inclusion criteria for the X participants were …
Eligibility criteria required individuals to have received ...
Five individuals were excluded from the study on the basis of ...
A small sample was chosen because of the expected difficulty of obtaining ...
The subjects were selected on the basis of a degree of homogeneity of their ...
A comparison group of 12 male subjects without any history of X was drawn from a pool of ...

Describing the process: typical verbs in the passive form
The data *were normalised* using ...
Ethical approval *was obtained from* ...
Drugs *were administered by* icv injection …
Descriptive data *were generated for* all variables.
The procedures of this study *were approved* by ...
Prompts *were used as* an aid to question two so that ...
Data *were collected* using semistructured interviews in …
The experiments *were run* using custom software written in...
Two sets of anonymised questionnaires *were completed by* ...
The solution *was washed* three times *with* deionized water and ...
A total of 256 samples *were taken from* 52 boreholes (Figure 11).
Significance levels *were set at* the 1% level using the student t-test.
Data management and analysis *were performed* using SPSS 16.0 (2010).
Published studies *were identified* using a search strategy developed in ...
Data were gathered from multiple sources at various time points during ...
Injection solutions *were coded by* a colleague to reduce experimenter bias.
The pilot interviews *were conducted informally by* the trained interviewer ...
Article references *were searched further for* additional relevant publications.
The subjects *were asked to* pay close attention to the characters whenever ...
The experiments *were conducted over* the course of the growing period from ...
Blood samples *were obtained with* consent, from 256 Caucasian male patients ...
Independent tests *were carried out on* the x and y scores for the four years from ...
This experiment *was repeated under* conditions in which the poor signal/noise ratio was improved.
The mean score for the two trials *was subjected to* multivariate analysis of variance to determine ...

The participants were asked	to comment on … to complete two tasks. whether they believed … to provide feedback on … a variety of questions about … to describe an instance when … to explain what happened during … to describe what had happened when … to complete a 20 question survey about … a series of open-ended questions that …

Describing the process: infinitive of purpose

In order to identify …, the participants were asked to ...
In order to help familiarise participants with …, they were asked to …
In order to address these ethical concerns, the following steps were taken: …
In order to understand how X regulates Y, a series of transfections was performed.

To establish whether ...,
To better understand how …
To measure X, a question asking ... was used.
To determine whether …, the cells were incubated for ...
To rule out the possibility that X, the participants were ...
To control for bias, measurements were carried out by another person.
To assess whether and how Xs are produced and received, we measured ...
To see if the two methods gave the same measurement, the data was plotted and ...
To enable the subjects to see the computer screen clearly, the laptop was configured with ...
To compare the scores three weeks after initial screening, a global ANOVA F-test was used.
To increase the reliability of measures, each X was tested twice with a 4-minute break between ...

The vials were capped with X *to prevent* ...
The process was repeated several times *in order to remove* ...
In an attempt *to make each interviewee feel* as comfortable as possible, the interviewer ...
The interview schedule comprised structured and open questions *to identify and explore* …

Describing the process: other phrases expressing purpose

For the attitude questions, a Likert scale was used.
For the purpose of height measurement, subjects were asked to stand ...
For the purpose of analysis, two segments were extracted from each ...
For the estimation of protein concentration, 100 µL of protein sample was mixed with ...

Describing the process: adverbs of manner

The resulting solution was	*gently*	mixed at room temperature for …
A sample of the concentrate was then	*carefully*	injected into ...
The soil was then placed in a furnace and	*gradually*	heated up to ...
The vials were shaken	*manually*	to allow the soil to mix well with the water.
The medium was then	*aseptically*	transferred to a conical flask.
The tubes were	*accurately*	reweighed to six decimal places using ...

Describing the process: using + instrument

All the work on the computer was carried out *using* ...
Data were collected *using* two high spectral resolution Xs.
Semi-automated genotyping was carried out *using* X software and ...
Using the X-ray and looking at the actual X, it was possible to identify ...
Comparisons between the two groups were made *using* unrelated t-tests
The data were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed *using* a ...
Statistical significance was analysed *using* analysis of variance and t-tests as appropriate..
15 subjects were recruited *using* email advertisements requesting healthy students from ...

Describing the process: sequence words and phrases

To begin this process, ...
The first step in this process was to ...
The second method used to identify X involved ...

Prior to	commencing the study, ethical clearance was sought from ... analysing the interview data, the transcripts were checked for … data collection, the participants received explanation of the project. undertaking the investigation, ethical clearance was obtained from ...
After	'training', the participants were told that ... collection, the samples were shipped back to X in ... testing for the presence of antibodies, the blood was … the appliance was fitted, the patients attended X every four weeks.
On	arrival at the clinic, patients were asked to ... completion of X, the process of parameter estimation was carried out. obtaining written informed consent from the patients, a questionnaire was …
Once	the samples were extracted, it was first necessary to … the Xs were located and marked, a thin clear plastic ruler ... the exposures were completed, the X was removed from the Y and placed in …… the positions had been decided upon, the Xs were removed from each Y and ….
Following	correction for ..., X was reduced to ... conformational analysis of X, it was necessary to ... administration of X to patients, we assessed the effects on … this treatment, the samples were recovered and stored overnight at ...

The participants were *then* shown a film individually and were asked to ...
The soil was *then* weighed again, and this weight was recorded as ...
These ratings were *then* made for the ten stimuli to which the subject had been exposed ...
The preparation was *then* placed in a custom-built microfluidics chamber, covered with …

When	dividing X, care was taken to ... removing X, it was important to ... inviting the participants, the purpose of the research was clearly explained.

Finally, questions were asked as to the role of ...
In the follow-up phase of the study, participants were asked ...
The final stage of the study comprised a semi-structured interview with participants who …

Describing the process: statistical procedures

The data *were normalised* using ...
A p value <0.05 *was considered* significant.
Descriptive data *were generated* for all variables.
Reliability *was calculated* using Cronbach's alpha.
All analyses *were carried out* using SPSS, version 20.
Statistical analysis *was performed* using SPSS software (version 20).
Significance levels *were set* at the 1% level using the student t-test.
Data management and analysis *were performed* using SPSS 16.0 (2010).
The mean score for the two trials *was subjected* to multivariate analysis of variance to determine ...

Indicating problems or limitations

In particular, the analysis of X was problematic.
In observational studies, there is a potential for bias from …
The small size of the dataset meant that it was not possible to ...
Further data collection is required to determine exactly how X affects Y.
Another major source of uncertainty is in the method used to calculate X.
In this investigation there are several sources for error. The main error is ...
It was not possible to investigate the significant relationships of X and Y further because…
The responses relating to X were subjective and were therefore susceptible to recall bias.

Reporting Results

The standard approach to this section of a research article or dissertation is to present and describe the results in a systematic and detailed way. When reporting qualitative results, the researcher will highlight and comment on the themes that emerge from the analysis. These comments will often be illustrated with excerpts from the raw data. In text based studies, this may comprise quotations from the primary sources. In quantitative studies, the results section is likely to consist of tables and figures, and writers comment on the significant data shown in these. This often takes the form of the location or summary statement, which identifies the table or figure and indicates its content, and a highlighting statement or statements, which point out and describe the relevant or significant data. All figures and tables should be numbered and given a title.

More elaborate commentary on the results is normally restricted to the Discussion section. In research articles, however, authors may comment extensively on their results as they are presented, and it is not uncommon for the Results section to be combined with the Discussion section under the heading: Results and Discussion.

Reference to aim, research questions or method

The first set of questions aimed to …
The purpose of Experiment 3 was to …
Simple statistical analysis was used to ...
The next question asked the informants …
Changes in X and Y were compared using ...
To assess X, the Y questionnaire was used.
Regression analysis was used to predict the ...
To distinguish between these two possibilities, ...
The first set of analyses examined the impact of ...
The correlation between X and Y was tested using …
T-tests were used to analyse the relationship between ...
The average scores of X and Y were compared in order to ...
In order to assess Z, repeated-measures ANOVAs were used.
Nine items on the questionnaire measured the extent to which ...
To compare the scores three weeks after initial screening, a global ANOVA F-test was used.
The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between ...

Table 1 Figure 1	shows compares presents provides	an overview of ... the experimental data on X. the summary statistics for ... the breakdown of X according to ... the intercorrelations among the nine measures of X. the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of X.

The table below illustrates The pie chart above shows The top half of the table shows The bottom half of the table shows	the proportion of different categories of ...

As shown in Figure 1, As can be seen from the table (above), From the graph above we can see that It can be seen from the data in Table 1 that	the X group reported significantly more Y than the other two groups.

The results of the correlational analysis The themes identified in these responses The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of X	are set out are shown are presented are summarised can be compared	in Table 1. in Figure 1.

Highlighting significant data in a table or chart

What is interesting in this data is that ...
It is apparent from this table that very few ...
In Fig.10 there is a clear trend of decreasing ...
The differences between X and Y are highlighted in Table 4.
From the chart, it can be seen that by far the greatest demand is for ...
From this data, we can see that Study 2 resulted in the lowest value of ...
This table is quite revealing in several ways. First, unlike the other tables ...
From the data in Figure 9, it is apparent that the length of time left between ...
Data from this table can be compared with the data in Table 4.6 which shows ...
As Table III shows, there is a significant difference ($t = -2.15$, $p = 0.03$) between the two groups.

Statements of positive result

The mean score for X was ...
Further analysis showed that ...
Further statistical tests revealed ...
A two-way ANOVA revealed that ...
On average, Xs were shown to have ...
Strong evidence of X was found when ...
Post hoc analysis revealed that during ...
Interestingly, for those subjects with X, ...
This result is significant at the $P = 0.05$ level.
The results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that ...
A positive correlation was found between X and Y.
There was a significant positive correlation between ...
There was a significant difference between the two conditions ...

Statements of negative result
No increase in X was detected.
No difference greater than X was observed.
No significant differences were found between ...
None of these differences were statistically significant.
No significant reduction in X was found compared with placebo.

There was no increase of X associated with ...
There were no significant differences between ...
There was no observed difference in the number of …

Only trace amounts of X were detected in ...
The Chi-square test did not show any significant differences between ...
Overall, X did not affect males and females differently in these measures.
A clear benefit of X in the prevention of Y could not be identified in this analysis.

Highlighting significant, interesting or surprising results
Interestingly, the X was observed to ...
This result is somewhat counterintuitive.
Interestingly, this correlation is related to ...
The more surprising correlation is with the ...
The most surprising aspect of the data is in the ...
The correlation between X and Y is interesting because ...
The most striking result to emerge from the data is that ...
Interestingly, there were also differences in the ratios of ...
The single most striking observation to emerge from the data comparison was ...

This is a/an (rather)	surprising significant interesting remarkable unexpected disappointing	result. outcome.

Reporting a reaction
Stimulation of X cells with Y did not increase the ...
With successive increases in intensity of the X, the Y moved further to ...
Following the addition of X, a significant increase ($P<0.05$) in the Y was recorded.
When X cells were stimulated with Y, no significant difference in the number of Z was detected.

Reporting results from questionnaires and interviews
The overall response to this question was poor.
Thirty-two individuals returned the questionnaires.
The overall response to this question was very positive.
The response rate was 60% at six months and 56% at 12 months.
Of the study population, 90 subjects completed and returned the questionnaire.
Of 150 patients who were sent invitations, 81 returned the reply slip, of whom 60 agreed to …
By the end of the survey period, data had been collected from 64 individuals, 23 of whom were …

There were 53 responses to the question: '...?'
Respondents were asked to indicate whether ...
Respondents were asked to suggest other reasons for ...
The total number of responses for this question was ...
In response to the question: '...?', a range of responses was elicited.
This section of the questionnaire required respondents to give information on ...

Over half of those surveyed reported that ...
70% of those who were interviewed indicated that ....
Almost two-thirds of the participants (64%) said that ....
The majority of those who responded to this item felt that ...
Approximately, half of those surveyed did not comment on ....
When asked whether ..., 90% of the respondents reported that ...
Just over half of those who answered this question reported that ...
In response to Question 1, most of those surveyed indicated that ...
When the participants were asked ……, the majority commented that ...
Of the 62 participants who responded to this question, 30 reported an increase in ...
Of the 148 patients who completed the questionnaire, just over half indicated that ...

Some participants expressed the belief that ...
A minority of participants (17%) indicated that ...
Only a small number of respondents indicated that ...
A small number of those interviewed suggested that ....

As one interviewee said: '... '
As one interviewee put it: '... '
One informant reported that ...
One participant commented: ' ...'
For example, one interviewee said: '... '
In one case, the participant thought that …
Another interviewee, when asked …, said: '...'
Another interviewee alluded to the notion of ...
Other responses to this question included: '... '
Talking about this issue an interviewee said: '...'
One individual stated that '...' And another commented '...'

Some interviewees argued that … , while others …
Some felt that … , while others considered that …
Whilst a minority mentioned that…, all agreed that…
Two divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged …

It was also suggested that ...
The comment below illustrates ...
Another reported problem was …
There were some suggestions that ...
In their accounts of the events surrounding ...
The participants on the whole demonstrated ...
There were some negative comments about ...
This view was echoed by another informant who ...

General observations about qualitative data
A number of issues were identified …
Five broad themes emerged from the analysis.
This theme came up for example in discussions of ….
Two discrete reasons emerged from this. First ... Second ….
The themes of X and Y recurred throughout the dataset.
A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst interviewees that …

In all cases, the informants reported …
A variety of perspectives were expressed …
These views surfaced mainly in relation to …
There was a sense of X amongst interviewees.
A common view amongst interviewees was that …
Issues related to X were not particularly prominent in the interview data.

Transition statements
If we now turn to ...
A comparison of the two results reveals ...
Turning now to the experimental evidence on ...
Comparing the two results, it can be seen that ...
The next section of the survey was concerned with ...
In the final part of the survey, respondents were asked ...

Summary and transition
These results suggest that ...
Overall, these results indicate that ...
In summary, these results show that ...
In summary, for the informants in this study, ...
Together these results provide important insights into ...
Taken together, these results suggest that there is an association between ...
The results in this chapter indicate that ... The next chapter, therefore, moves on to discuss the ...

Discussing Findings

The term 'discussion' has a variety of meanings in English. In academic writing, however, it usually refers to two types of activity: a) considering both sides of an issue, or question before reaching a conclusion; b) considering the results of research and the implications of these. Discussion sections in dissertations and research articles are probably the most complex sections in terms of their elements. They normally centre around a 'statement of result' or an important 'finding'. As there is usually more than one result, discussion sections are often structured into a series of discussion cycles. The most common elements in these cycles, and some of the language that is typically associated with them, are listed below.

Note that when offering explanations and suggesting implications the language used is very tentative or cautious (refer to the section entitled *Expressing Caution*).

Background information: reference to literature or to research aim/question

Several reports have shown that …
As mentioned in the literature review, ...
The third question in this research was ...
Prior studies that have noted the importance of ...
An initial objective of the project was to identify ...
The first question in this study sought to determine ...
It was hypothesised that participants with a history of ...
Very little was found in the literature on the question of ...
The present study was designed to determine the effect of ...
With respect to the first research question, it was found that …
This study set out with the aim of assessing the importance of X in ...
Previous studies evaluating X observed inconsistent results on whether …
A strong relationship between X and Y has been reported in the literature.
In reviewing the literature, no data was found on the association between X and Y.

Statements of result: usually with reference to results section

One interesting finding is ...
The current study found that ...
Another important finding was that ...
In this study, Xs were found to cause ...
The most interesting finding was that ...
The results of this study show/indicate that ...
On the question of X, this study found that ...
This experiment did not detect any evidence for ...

(Perhaps) the most	striking important significant compelling disturbing unexpected clinically relevant	finding is …

X provided the largest set of significant clusters of ...
It is interesting to note that in all seven cases of this study ...
The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that ...
In the current study, comparing X with Y showed that the mean degree of ...
The results of this study did not show that …/did not show any significant increase in ...

Unexpected outcome
What is surprising is that ...
Surprisingly, X was found to ...
One unanticipated finding was that ...
Surprisingly, no differences were found in ...
This finding was unexpected and suggests that ...
It is somewhat surprising that no X was noted in this condition ...
These findings are somewhat surprising given the fact that other research shows …
Contrary to expectations, this study did not find a significant difference between ...
However, the observed difference between X and Y in this study was not significant.
However, the ANOVA (one way) showed that these results were not statistically significant.

Reference to previous research: support
These results agree with the findings of other studies, in which ...
These results are consistent with those of other studies and suggest that ...
The results of this study will now be compared to the findings of previous work.
The results of this study are in keeping with previous observational studies, which ...

These results	further support the idea of ... confirm the association between ... are consistent with data obtained in … match those observed in earlier studies. are in agreement with those obtained by … are in line with those of previous studies. are in accord with recent studies indicating that … seem to be consistent with other research which found ... mirror those of the previous studies that have examined ... are consistent with those of Smith and Jones (2015) who ... are in agreement with Smith's (1999) findings which showed ... support previous research into this brain area which links X and Y. corroborate the ideas of Smith and Jones (2008), who suggested that ...

This study confirms that X is associated with ...
Comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms …
This also accords with our earlier observations, which showed that ...
Increased activation in the X in this study corroborates these earlier findings.
In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that ...
It is encouraging to compare this figure with that found by Jones (1993) who found that ...
This study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in ...
There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by X in this study and those described by (Smith, 1987, 1995)

Reference to previous research: contradict
This study has been unable to demonstrate that ...
However, this result has not previously been described.
In contrast to earlier findings, however, no evidence of X was detected.
Smith *et al.* (1999) showed that …. This differs from the findings presented here ...
However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research.
It has been suggested that … (Smith *et al*., 2002). This does not appear to be the case.
These results differ from X's 2003 estimate of Y, but they are broadly consistent with earlier ...
Although, these results differ from some published studies (Smith, 1992; Jones, 1996), they are consistent with those of ...

Explanations for results
A possible *explanation* for this might be that ...
Another possible *explanation* for this is that ...
This result may be *explained* by the fact that ...
There are, however, other possible *explanations*.
These relationships may partly be *explained* by …
There are several possible *explanations* for this result.
A possible *explanation* for these results may be the lack of adequate ...
These differences can be *explained* in part by the proximity of X and Y.
These factors may *explain* the relatively good correlation between X and Y.

This inconsistency may be due to ...
These results are likely to be related to …
This discrepancy could be attributed to ...
It seems possible that these results are due to ...
This rather contradictory result may be due to ...
The observed increase in X could be attributed to …
It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to ...

The possible interference of X cannot be ruled out.
It may be that these participants benefitted from ...
Differences between X and Y may have influenced ...
These possible sources of error could have affected …
There are two likely causes for the differences between ...
The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with ...
The observed correlation between X and Y might be explained in this way: ...
Since this difference has not been found elsewhere it is probably not due to ...

This rather	(intriguing) (interesting) (surprising) (unexpected) (disappointing)	result finding	could be due to … may be related to … might be a result of … could be attributed to … can be explained by X. might be explained by the fact that …

Advising cautious interpretation
Another source of uncertainty is …
A note of caution is due here since …
These findings may be somewhat limited by …
These findings cannot be extrapolated to all patients.
These data must be interpreted with caution because ...
It could be argued that the positive results were due to …
These results therefore need to be interpreted with caution.
In observational studies, there is a potential for bias from …
It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses.
Although exclusion of X did not ..., these results should be interpreted with caution.
However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be …

It is possible that these results	are due to … are limited to … are only valid for … do not represent the … have been confounded by ... may have been skewed by … might be biased because of … could be a statistical anomaly. were influenced by the lack of … merely reflect a selection effect. may underestimate the role of … are not a true representation of … underestimate the true prevalence of … are an artefact of our experimental design. might not be applicable to other groups … are biased, given the self-reported nature of … will not be reproducible on a wide scale across … may not be generalisable to a broader range of ...

Suggesting general hypotheses
These findings suggest that ...
It is possible, therefore, that ...
It can thus be suggested that ...
In general, therefore, it seems that ...
According to these data, we can infer that …
It is possible/likely/probable therefore that ...
Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised that ...
This observation may support the hypothesis that …
It may be the case therefore that these variations ...
It is therefore likely that such connections exist between ...
The value of X suggests that a weak link may exist between ...
These results provide further support for the hypothesis that ...
Therefore, X could be a major factor, if not the only one, causing ...
It is possible to hypothesise that these conditions are less likely to occur in ...

Commenting on findings
These findings are rather disappointing.
However, these results were not very encouraging.
The test was successful as it was able to identify students who ...
The present results are significant in at least two major respects.
Unfortunately, these findings are rather difficult to interpret because …

This is a These are	key useful positive valuable troubling surprising important significant interesting reassuring remarkable encouraging disappointing	result(s). finding(s).

This is a These are	rather somewhat particularly	useful troubling surprising reassuring remarkable encouraging disappointing	result(s). finding(s).

Noting implications
It can therefore be assumed that the ...
An implication of this is the possibility that ...
The present study raises the possibility that ...
One of the issues that emerges from these findings is ...
Some of the issues emerging from this finding relate specifically to ...
This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that ...

These findings may help us to understand ...
This finding, while preliminary, suggests that ….
This finding has important implications for developing ...
This observational study suggests that a diet rich in X may help prevent ...
These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of ...
These findings suggest that the lowering of X emissions may reduce hospital admissions for …

These findings	may will might should	help us to help others to	shape … design… predict … develop … prioritise … find new ways of … better understand …

Suggestions for future work

This is an important issue for future research.
Research questions that could be asked include ...
There are still many unanswered questions about …
Several questions remain unanswered at present.
Despite these promising results, questions remain.
Further work is required to establish the viability of...
Further research should be undertaken to investigate the ...
There is abundant room for further progress in determining …
A further study with more focus on X is therefore suggested.
Future studies on the current topic are therefore recommended.
In further research, the use of this data as X could be a means of ...
To develop a full picture of X additional studies will be needed that ...
In future investigations, it might be possible to use a different X in which ...
Further studies, which take these variables into account, will need to be undertaken.
However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between X and Y is more clearly understood.

Further	work is research is studies are investigations are	required to needed to	identify the … establish how … confirm whether … assess the risks of … ascertain whether … determine whether … examine the effects of … evaluate the impact of … address the following questions: explore the mechanisms behind … assess the longer term impact of … confirm and validate these findings. identify or develop drugs that can … assess the competing therapies for … develop reliable analytical methods for ... shed light on the mechanism underlying ... provide greater insight into the effects of … gain a better understanding of the possible … establish the effectiveness of treatment with … better understand the mechanisms underlying …

Writing Conclusions

Conclusions are shorter sections of academic texts which usually serve two functions. The first is to summarise and bring together the main areas covered in the writing, which might be called 'looking back'; and the second is to give a final comment or judgement on this. The final comment may also include making suggestions for improvement and speculating on future directions.

In dissertations and research papers, conclusions tend to be more complex and will also include sections on the significance of the findings and recommendations for future work. Conclusions may be optional in research articles where consolidation of the study and general implications are covered in the *Discussion* section. However, they are usually expected in dissertations and essays.

Restatement of aims

This paper has argued that ...
This essay has discussed the reasons for ...
In this investigation, the aim was to assess ...
The main goal of the current study was to determine ...
The purpose of the current study was to determine ...
This project was undertaken to design ... and evaluate ...
The present study was designed to determine the effect of ...
The second aim of this study was to investigate the effects of …
Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that ...

This study set out to	predict which … establish whether … determine whether … develop a model for … assess the effects of … investigate impact of … better understand the … find a new method for … evaluate how effective … assess the feasibility of … test the hypothesis that … explore the influence of … gain a better understanding of … objectively measure and assess … examine the relationship between … compare the two ways of treating … critically examine the ways in which … evaluate a new method of measuring … provide the first systematic account of … understand the views and experiences of … review in detail the available information on …

This study has	examined	the role of … the impact of … the nature of … the concept of … the differences between … the relationship between … the peer reviewed literature on … the factors which are thought to contribute to …

Summarising research findings
This study has identified …
This study has shown that ...
The research has also shown that ...
The second major finding was that ...
These experiments confirmed that …
X made no significant difference to …
This study has found that generally ...
The investigation of X has shown that ...
The results of this investigation show that ...
X, Y and Z emerged as reliable predictors of ...
Multiple regression analysis revealed that the ...
The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that ...
The relevance of X is clearly supported by the current findings.
One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that ...

Suggesting implications for the field of knowledge
In general, therefore, it seems that ...
The results of this study indicate that ...
These findings suggest that in general ...
The findings of this study suggest that ...
Taken together, these results suggest that ...
An implication of this is the possibility that ...
The evidence from this study suggests that ...
Overall, this study strengthens the idea that …
The current data highlight the importance of …
The findings of this research provide insights for …
The results of this research support the idea that ...
These data suggest that X can be achieved through ...
The theoretical implications of these findings are unclear.
The principal theoretical implication of this study is that …
This study has raised important questions about the nature of …
The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study ...
Taken together, these findings suggest a role for X in promoting Y.
The findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies.
These findings have significant implications for the understanding of how …
Although this study focuses on X, the findings may well have a bearing on ...
These findings raised important theoretical issues that have a bearing on the ...

Significance of the findings or contribution of the study

The contribution of this study has been to confirm …
Before this study, evidence of X was purely anecdotal.
This study provides the first comprehensive assessment of …
This work contributes to existing knowledge X by providing ...
This study establishes a quantitative framework for detecting …
This is the largest study so far documenting a delayed onset of ...
The analysis of X undertaken here, has extended our knowledge of ...
The empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of ...
This paper contributes to recent historiographical debates concerning …
The present study adds to the growing body of research that indicates …
This approach will prove useful in expanding our understanding of how …
The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of ...
The study has confirmed the findings of Smith *et al.* (2001) which found that...
This new understanding should help to improve predictions of the impact of …
The methods used for this X may be applied to other Xs elsewhere in the world.
These findings will be of broad use to the scientific and biomedical communities.
The X that we have identified therefore assists in our understanding of the role of ...
This is the first study of substantial duration which examines associations between …
The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. First,…

These findings	illustrate how … could be used to help … are particularly relevant for … provide insights into whether … enhance our understanding of ... provide additional evidence for … will help other researchers design … add to a growing body of literature on ... represent a major breakthrough in the way … are relevant to both practitioners and policy-makers.

The present study This research	extends our knowledge of ... has demonstrated, for the first time, that ... will serve as a base for future studies and ... should prove to be particularly valuable to ... makes several noteworthy contributions to ... has offered a framework for the exploration of ... has provided additional evidence with respect to ... has several practical applications. Firstly, it points to ... has shed a contemporary light on the contentious issue of … confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests ..

This is the first study	to identify … to show that … to test the effects of … to firmly establish that … to reveal the presence of ‘’. to provide evidence for … to investigate the effect of ... to report an an association between … to integrate modelling approaches intended to … that has used … that has found … that has revealed … that has measured … that has presented evidence for … that has investigated the effects of … that evaluated the effectiveness of … that has documented the impact of … that has shown a clear-cut positive effect of …

Significance of the findings with a qualification
Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that ...
Whilst this study did not confirm X, it did partially substantiate ...
Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into ...
Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants, the findings suggest ...

Commenting on the limitations of the current study
A *limitation* of this study is that …
Being *limited* to X, this study lacks …
The major *limitation* of this study is the ...
This study was *limited* by the absence of …
The most important *limitation* lies in the fact that ...
Thirdly, the study did not evaluate the use of ...
The scope of this study was limited in terms of ...
The study is *limited* by the lack of information on ...
A *limitation* of using this kind of data is that it precludes ...
Study *limitations* make an overall conclusion about X extremely difficult.
Finally, a number of important *limitations* need to be considered. First, ...
The findings in this report are subject to at least three *limitations*. First, ...
However, these findings are *limited* by the use of a cross sectional design.
The principal *limitation* of this analysis was the variance in the design of …
This *limitation* means that study findings need to be interpreted cautiously.
The generalisability of these results is subject to certain *limitations*. For instance, ...
Several *limitations* to this pilot study need to be acknowledged. The sample size is ...
The project was *limited* in several ways. First, the project used a convenience sample that …

This The current The present	study research investigation	was limited by ... has only examined ... has not been able to establish … has only considered the context of … has not been able to confirm earlier … was unable to analyse these variables. was not specifically designed to evaluate factors related to …

However, these results may not be applicable to	all types of … all situations. other species. patients who … all clinical settings. organisations which … other groups within … the wider population.

X makes these findings less generalisable to ...
It is unfortunate that the study did not include ...
The main weakness of this study was the paucity of ...
Since the study was limited to X, it was not possible to ..
An additional uncontrolled factor is the possibility that ...
It was not possible to assess X; therefore, it is unknown if …
An issue that was not addressed in this study was whether...
An arguable weakness is the arbitrariness in our definition of ...
A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study.
The responses relating to X were subjective and were therefore susceptible to recall bias.
The sample was nationally representative of X but would tend to miss people who were ...
One source of weakness in this study which could have affected the measurements of X was ...
With a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to ...
Although the study has successfully demonstrated that ..., it has certain limitations in terms of ...

Another source of uncertainty	is has been	the role of … the estimate for … the assumption that … associated with changes in … the variation of X over time. is the possibility of measurement errors in …

Commenting on the strengths of the current study
A key strength of the present study was the ...
The main strength of this study is the exclusion of …
One strength of this study is the high rate of follow-up, …
The key strengths of this study are its long duration and ...
Although the findings should be interpreted with caution, this study has several strengths …
One of the strengths of this study is that it represents a comprehensive examination of the whole …

Recommendations for further research work
The question raised by this study is …
More research using controlled trials is needed to …
What is now needed is a cross-national study involving ...
More broadly, research is also needed to determine ...
This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation.

It would be interesting to assess the effects of ...
It would be interesting to compare experiences of individuals within the same … .
It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas:
It is suggested that the association of these factors is investigated in future studies.

A further study could assess the long-term effects of ...
Further work needs to be done to establish whether ...
Further studies need to be carried out in order to validate ...
Further experimental investigations are needed to estimate ...
Further studies regarding the role of X would be worthwhile/interesting.
Further investigation and experimentation into X is strongly recommended.

Further research	might explore … could usefully explore how … should focus on determining … is required to determine whether … in this field would be of great help in … should be carried out to establish the … should be undertaken to explore how … on these questions would be a useful way of ... needs to examine more closely the links between X and Y. could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of …

A future study investigating X would be very interesting.
In terms of directions for future research, further work could ...
In the future, it will be important to explore the potential use of …
Another possible area of future research would be to investigate why ...
A number of possible future studies using the same experimental set up are apparent.

Future studies should	include … focus on … target specific … clarify whether … attempt to identify … assess the impact of ... explore the effects of … seek to minimise bias by … investigate the degree to which … concentrate on the investigation of ... address the questions raised by this research.

The study should be repeated using ...
This would be a fruitful area for further work.
Several questions still remain to be answered.
A natural progression of this work is to analyse ...
Considerably more work will need to be done to determine ...
The precise mechanism of X in insects remains to be elucidated.
These findings provide the following insights for future research: ...
Large randomised controlled trials could provide more definitive evidence.
A greater focus on X could produce interesting findings that account more for ...
The issue of X is an intriguing one which could be usefully explored in further research.
If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of X needs to be developed.
I suggest that before X is introduced, a study similar to this one should be carried out on ...
More information on X would help us to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

Further	research is studies are	needed required	to better understand	why … how … the nature of … the causes of … the impact of … the reasons for … the influence of … the extent to which … the role that X plays in … how X is associated with … the risks associated with … the underlying causes of … the possible link between ... the relationship between … the discrepancies between … the mechanisms underlying … the effectiveness and safety of … the complex linkages between … the complex interaction between … the complex association between …

More research	is required is needed	to account for ... in order to determine which … to determine the efficacy and safety of ... to examine the long-term efficacy and safety of … to better understand when implementation ends and ... to develop a deeper understanding of the relationships between …

Implications and/or recommendations for practice or policy
Other types of X could include: a), b). ...
There is, therefore, a definite need for ...
Greater efforts are needed to ensure ...
Provision of X will enhance Y and reduce Z.
Another important practical implication is that ...
Moreover, more X should be made available to ...
The challenge now is to fabricate Xs that contain …
Unless governments adopt X, Y will not be attained.
These findings suggest several courses of action for ...
A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be to ...
Continued efforts are needed to make X more accessible to ...
The findings of this study have a number of practical implications.
There are a number of important changes which need to be made.
Management to enhance bumble-bee populations might involve ...
This study suggests that X should be avoided by people who are prone to …
A key policy priority should therefore be to plan for the long-term care of ...
This information can be used to develop targetted interventions aimed at ...
Taken together, these findings do not support strong recommendations to ...
Ensuring appropriate systems, services and support for X should be a priority for …
The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice.
An implication of these findings is that both X and Y should be taken into account when ...

General functions of academic writing

Being Critical

As an academic writer, you are expected to be critical of the sources that you use. This essentially means questioning what you read and not necessarily agreeing with it just because the information has been published. Being critical can also mean looking for reasons why we should not just accept something as being correct or true. This can require you to identify problems with a writer's arguments or methods, or perhaps to refer to other people's criticisms of these. Constructive criticism goes beyond this by suggesting ways in which a piece of research or writing could be improved.

... being against is not enough. We also need to develop habits of constructive thinking.

Edward de Bono

Highlighting inadequacies of previous studies

Previous studies of X have not dealt with ...
Researchers have not treated X in much detail.
Such expositions are unsatisfactory because they ...
Most studies in the field of X have only focussed on ...
Half of the studies evaluated failed to specify whether ...
The research to date has tended to focus on X rather than Y.
However, these studies used non-validated methods to measure ...
Most studies in X have only been carried out in a small number of areas.
The existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between X and Y.
However, much of the research up to now has been descriptive in nature ...
Small sample sizes have been a serious limitation for many earlier studies.
The generalisability of much published research on this issue is problematic.
However, few writers have been able to draw on any structured research into ...
However, only a small number of participants took part and it was not made clear ...
However, these results were limited to X and are therefore not representative of ...
The experimental data are rather controversial, and there is no general agreement about ...
Although extensive research has been carried out on X, no single study exists which adequately ...
However, these results were based upon data from over 30 years ago and it is unclear if these differences still persist.

Introducing questions, problems and limitations: theory or argument

The main weakness with this theory is that …
The key problem with this explanation is that ...
However, this theory does not fully explain why …
One criticism of much of the literature on X is that ...
However, there is an inconsistency with this argument.
A serious weakness with this argument, however, is that ...
One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether ...
Smith's argument relies too heavily on qualitative analysis of ...
Smith's interpretation overlooks much of the historical research ...
Many writers have challenged Smith's claim on the grounds that ...
Smith's analysis does not take account of X, nor does he examine ...
It seems that Jones' understanding of the X framework is questionable.
The existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between X and Y.
One of the limitations with this explanation is that it does not explain why… .

The theory is unable to	predict … explain why … fully account for … adequately explain the … explain what happens when … make any useful prediction about … explain the differences observed when … provide a comprehensive explanation for …

The current model of X suffers from	poor scalability. unnecessary complexity. lack of empirical support. several methodological problems. certain weaknesses that hinder its ability to …

Introducing questions, problems and limitations: method or practice
One major drawback of this approach is that ...
Selection bias is another potential concern because ...
Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of this method is that ...
The main limitation of biosynthetic incorporation, however, is ...
All the studies reviewed so far, however, suffer from the fact that ...
Another problem with this approach is that it fails to take X into account.
Difficulties arise, however, when an attempt is made to implement the policy.
Nevertheless, the strategy has not escaped criticism from governments, agencies and academics.

However,	such explanations tend to overlook the fact that ... this method of analysis has a number of limitations. this method does involve potential measurement error. there are limits to how far the idea of/concept of X can be taken. approaches of this kind carry with them various well known limitations. one of the problems with the instrument the researchers used to measure X was ...

However, all the previously mentioned methods suffer from some serious	drawbacks. limitations. weaknesses. shortcomings. disadvantages.

Selection bias is another (potential)	risk. concern. problem. limitation. weakness. threat to internal validity. limitation of systematic reviews.

Highlighting the inadequacy of a study or paper
Smith fails to acknowledge the social aspects of …
However, the paper does not draw a distinction between …
The main weakness of the study is the failure to address how ...
Smith's study of X is considered to be the most important, but it does suffer from the fact that ...
Although this is the most comprehensive account of X produced so far, it does suffer from a number of flaws.

Smith The paper The book	fails to does not makes no attempt to	specify … quantify … compare … separate … account for … suggest why … analyse how … ascertain whether … distinguish between … explain the meaning of … provide information on … address the question of … assess the effectiveness of … use a standardised method of … give sufficient consideration to … consider the long term impact of … offer an adequate explanation for … engage with current discourses on ... determine the underlying causes of … systematically review all the relevant literature.

The study The report Smith	overlooks fails to acknowledge makes no attempt to consider	the impact of … the reasons for … the evidence for … the contexts in which … several key aspects of … the variable nature of … other explanations for … the complex nature of … the potential impact of … the social dimension of … the dynamic aspects of ... the underlying causes of … demographic factors that ... the ethical implications of ... the important role played by … the broader implications of how ... the unique complexities faced by ... the contextual factors that influence …

(However,)	the study the paper	suffers from	selection bias. limited sample size. poor external validity. multiple design flaws. an overemphasis on … serious statistical flaws. insufficient sample size. inconsistent definitions. poorly developed theory. a lack of clarity in defining. historical and cultural bias. methodological limitations. serious sampling problems. inadequate research design. considerable design limitations. the use of poorly matched controls. a paucity of standardised measures. notable methodological weaknesses. fundamental flaws in research design. lack of a strong theoretical framework certain ambiguities at the conceptual level. an over-reliance on self-report methodology. a restricted range of methodological approaches. shortcomings in the methods used to select cases. a lack of well-grounded theoretical considerations. several conceptual and methodological weaknesses.

(However,)	the paper does not address … Smith fails to fully define what ... a major criticism of Smith's work is that ... Jones fails to acknowledge the significance of ... the author overlooks the fact that X contributes to Y. what Smith fails to do is to draw a distinction between ... the paper would appear to be over ambitious in its claims. the main weakness of the study is the failure to address how ... another weakness is that we are given no explanation of how ... the research does not take into account pre-existing ... such as ... no attempt was made to quantify the association between X and Y. the study fails to consider the differing categories of damage that ... the author offers no explanation for the distinction between X and Y. Smith makes no attempt to differentiate between different types of X.

No attempt has been made to	determine whether … investigate whether … estimate the risk of … model the dynamics of ... quantify the degree of …

Offering constructive suggestions

The study would have been more interesting if it had included …
These studies would have been more useful if they had focused on …
The study would have been more relevant if the researchers had asked …
The questionnaire would have been more useful if it had asked participants about …
The research would have been more relevant if a wider range of X had been explored.

The study The findings Smith's paper Her conclusions	would have been might have been	more much more far more	useful original relevant convincing interesting persuasive	if he/she had if the author had

used ... included … adopted… provided … considered …

A more comprehensive study would include all the groups of ...
A better study would examine a large, randomly selected sample of societies with ...
A much more systematic approach would identify how X interacts with other variables that ...

Using evaluative adjectives to comment on research

In his In her In this	useful timely detailed thorough excellent important impressive comprehensive ground breaking ——————— limited small-scale	study (of X), survey (of X), analysis (of X), examination (of X), investigation (into X),	Smith (2012) Jones (2014)	found ... concluded that ... was able to show ...

Introducing general criticism by others
Critics question the ability of the X theory to provide ...
Non-government agencies are also very critical of the new policies.
Smith's meta-analysis has been subjected to considerable criticism.
The most important of these criticisms is that Smith failed to note that ...
The X theory has been vigorously challenged in recent years by a number of writers.
These claims have been strongly contested in recent years by a number of writers.
More recent arguments against X have been summarised by Smith and Jones (1982):
Critics have also argued that not only do surveys provide an inaccurate measure of X, but the ...
Many analysts now argue that the strategy of X has not been successful. Jones (2003), for example, argues that ...

Introducing the critical stance of particular writers
Jones (2003) has also questioned why ...
However, Jones (2003) points out that ...
The authors challenge the widely held view that ...
Jones (2003) has challenged some of Smith's conclusions, arguing that ...
Jones (2003) is critical of the conclusions that Smith draws from his findings.
Jones (2003) is probably the best known critic of the X theory. He argues that ...
The latter point has been devastatingly critiqued by Jones (2003), who argues that ...
Other authors (see Harbison, 2003; Kaplan, 2004) question the usefulness of such an approach.
Smith's analysis has been criticised by a number of writers. Jones (1993), for example, points out ...

Introducing a section of text which has a critical purpose

The section below The section that follows	critically	assesses examines	the idea that … the view that … the claim that … the quality of … the concept of … the role played by … the argument that … Smith's analysis of … the effectiveness of … the current approaches to …

Being Cautious

One of the most noticeable stylistic aspects of academic communication is the tendency for writers to avoid expressing absolute certainty, where there may be a small degree of uncertainty, and to avoid making over-generalisations, where a small number of exceptions might exist. This means that there are many instances where the epistemological strength (strength of knowledge) of a statement or claim is mitigated (weakened) in some way. In the field of linguistics, devices for lessening the strength of a statement or claim are known as hedging devices.

Analysis of research reports have shown that discussion sections tend to be particularly rich in hedging devices, particularly where writers are offering explanations for findings.

Devices that distance the writer from a proposition

It is thought that ...
It is believed that ...
It has been reported that ...
It is a widely held view that ...
It has commonly been assumed that ...

According to Smith (2002), ...
According to recent reports, ...
According to many in the field ...
Smith (2001) holds the view that ...
Many scholars hold the view that ...
Recent research has suggested that ...
If Smith's (2001) findings are accurate, ...
There is some evidence to suggest that ...
There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that …

Being cautious when giving explanations or hypothesizing

These frequent storms	are almost certainly could be may be might be	due to climate change.

It is almost certain It is likely It is probable It may be It could be It is possible	that	these frequent storms	are a result of climate change.

A likely explanation A probable explanation A possible explanation	is that	these frequent storms	are a result of climate change.

Being cautious when explaining results

This inconsistency may be due to ...
This discrepancy could be attributed to ...
A possible explanation for this might be that ...
It seems possible that these results are due to ...
This rather contradictory result may be due to ...
The observed increase in X could be attributed to ...
The possible interference of X cannot be ruled out ...
There are several possible explanations for this result.
There are two likely causes for the differences between ...
A possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate ...
Since this difference has not been found elsewhere it is probably not due to ...

It is possible that these results	are due to … are limited to … are only valid for … do not represent the … have been confounded by ... may have been skewed by … might be biased because of … could be a statistical anomaly might have been affected by … were influenced by the lack of … merely reflect a selection effect. may underestimate the role of … are not a true representation of … underestimate the true prevalence of … are an artefact of our experimental design. might not be applicable to other groups … are biased, given the self-reported nature of … will not be reproducible on a wide scale across … may not be generalisable to a broader range of ...

Being cautious when discussing implications or recommendations

The findings of this study *suggest* that ...
The evidence from this study *suggests* that ...
Taken together, these results *suggest* that ...
Initial observations *suggest* that there may be a link between ...
The data reported here *appear to* support the assumption that ...
The findings from these studies *suggest* that X can have an effect on ...

One possible implication of this is that ...
Strategies to enhance X might involve ...
Other types of response could include: a), b). ...
These results would seem to suggest that the ...
There would therefore seem to be a definite need for ...
A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be to ...
Another possible area of future research would be to investigate why ...

Devices for avoiding over-generalisation

In general, this requires ...
In general terms, this means ...
X is generally assumed to play a role in ...
Authors generally place an emphasis on …
X uses generally accepted principles to ...
Generally accepted methods for X include: ...
Studies which show no effect are not generally published.
Research articles generally consist of the following components:
Quantitative research is generally associated with the positivist paradigm.

Ozone is toxic to	almost all most many types of the majority of certain types of some types of	living organisms.

Ozone levels	nearly always generally frequently often sometimes occasionally	exceed WHO levels in many cities.

In general, the study found a tendency for …
There is a *tendency* for ozone to attack cells.
Ozone *tends* to attack cells and break down tissues.
Smith (2003) found a *tendency* for X to be associated with …
Smith *et al*. (1985) found a *tendency* for survey respondents to over-report ...
The *tendency* for extreme scores to move toward the mean score over time is known as ...

Being cautious when writing about the future

Severe weather	will almost certainly will probably is likely to could may might	become more common in the future.

It is almost certain There is a strong possibility It is likely It is possible There is a possibility There is a small chance	that	the situation will improve in the long term.

Advising cautious interpretation of findings (Refer to *Discussing Findings*)
These findings cannot be extrapolated to all patients.
These data must be interpreted with caution because ...
These results therefore need to be interpreted with caution.
It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses.
Although exclusion of X did not ..., these results should be interpreted with caution.
However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be ...
The lack of a standardised outcome measure makes it difficult to interpret these results with confidence.

Classifying and Listing

When we classify things, we group and name them on the basis of something that they have in common. By doing this we can understand certain qualities and features which they share as a class. Classifying is also a way of understanding differences between things. In writing, classifying is often used as a way of introducing a reader to a new topic. Along with writing definitions, the function of classification may be used in the early part of an essay, or longer piece of writing. We list things when we want to treat and present a series of items or different pieces of information systematically. The order of a list may indicate ranked importance.

General classifications

X can be classified into Xi and Xii.
X can be categorised into Xi, Xii and Xiii.
There are two main types of X: Xi and Xii.
Generally, X provides two types of information: Xi and Xii.
It has become commonplace to distinguish 'Xi' from 'Xii' forms of X.
Bone is generally classified into two types: Xi bone, also known as ..., and Xii bone or ...
The theory distinguishes two different types of X, i.e. social X and semantic X (Al-Masry, 2013).
The works of X fall under three headings: (1) dialogues and ...; (2) collections of facts; and (3) …
Smith's systematic treatises may be grouped into several divisions: logic, psychological works …
There are two basic approaches currently being adopted in research into X. One is the Y approach and the other is ...

X may be divided into	three main	classes. sub-groups. categories.

X may be classified	in terms of on the basis of according to depending on	Y	into Xi and Xii.

Specific classifications

Smith's Taxonomy is a multi-tiered model of classifying X.
To better understand X, Smith *et al.*(2011) classified Y into three distinct types using ...
In Jones' system, individuals were classified as belonging to upper or lower categories of ...
Smith's Taxonomy is a classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of …
Smith and Jones (2003) argue that there are two broad categories of Y, which are: a) ... and b) ...
For Aristotle, motion is of four kinds: (1) motion which ...; (2) motion which ...; (3) motion which ...; and (4) motion which...

In the traditional system, X is graded	in terms of ... on the basis of ... according to whether ...

Smith (1966)	divided classified grouped	Xs	into two broad types: Xi's and Xii's.

Thomas (1996) describes	four basic kinds of validity:	logical, content, criterion and construct.

Smith's taxonomy is	used to classify … a hierarchical model for classifying ... a well-known description of levels of … a classification of learning objectives .... a widely acknowledged classification system useful for .... a multi-tiered model of classifying X according to different levels of …

Commenting on a system of classification: positive or neutral

This system of classification	includes ... allows for ... helps distinguish ... is useful because ... is very simple and … provides a basis for ... has clinical relevance. was agreed upon after ... can vary depending on ... is still respected and used is particularly well suited for … has withstood the test of time. is a convenient way to describe … has been broadened to include ... was developed for the purpose of ... is more scientific since it is based on …

Commenting on a system of classification: negative

This system of classification	is misleading. is now out of date. can be problematic. is in need of revision. poses a problem for ... is not universally used. is somewhat arbitrary. is simplistic and arbitrary. has relevance only within … has now been largely abandoned. is obsolete and tends to be avoided. has limited utility with respect to ...

Introducing lists

This topic can best be treated under three headings: X, Y and Z.
The key aspects of management can be listed as follows: X, Y and Z.
There are two types of effect which result when a patient undergoes X. These are ...
The *Three Voices for Mass* is divided into six sections. These are: the *Kyrie, Gloria*, ...
There are three reasons why the English language has become so dominant. These are:
Appetitive stimuli have three separable basic functions. Firstly, they ... Secondly, they ...
This section has been included for several reasons: it is ...; it illustrates ...; and it describes...
The disadvantages of the new approach can be discussed under three headings, which are: ...
During his tour of Britain, he visited the following industrial centres: Manchester, Leeds, and ...
The *Mass for Four Voices* consists of five movements, which are: the *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Santus* and *Agnus Dei*.

Referring to other people's lists

Smith and Jones (1991) list X, Y and Z as the major causes of infant mortality.
Smith (2003) lists the main features of X as follows: it is X; it is Y; and it has Z.
Smith (2003) argues that there are two broad categories of Y, which are: a) ... and b) ...
Smith (2003) suggests three conditions for X . Firstly, X should be ... Secondly, it needs to be...
For Aristotle, motion is of four kinds: (1) motion which ...; (2) motion which ...; (3) motion which ...; and (4) motion which...

Comparing and Contrasting

By understanding similarities and differences between two things, we can increase our understanding and learn more about both. This usually involves a process of analysis, in which we compare the specific parts as well as the whole. Comparison may also be a preliminary stage of evaluation. For example, by comparing specific aspects of A and B, we can decide which is more useful or valuable. Many paragraphs whose function is to compare or contrast will begin with an introductory sentence expressed in general terms.

Introducing differences

X is different from Y in a number of respects.
X differs from Y in a number of important ways.
There are a number of important differences between X and Y.
Areas where significant differences have been found include X and Y.
In contrast to earlier findings, however, no evidence of X was detected.
A descriptive case study differs from an exploratory study in that it uses …
Jones (2013) found dramatic differences in the rate of decline of X between Y and Z.
Women and men differ not only in physical attributes but also in the way in which they ...
The nervous systems of X are significantly different from those of Y in several key features.

Smith (2003)	found observed	only slight minor distinct significant notable considerable major	differences between X and Y.

Introducing similarities

Both X and Y share a number of key features.
There are a number of similarities between X and Y.
The effects of X on human health are similar to those of Y.
Both X and Y generally take place in a 'safe environment'.
These results are similar to those reported by (Smith *et al*. 1999).
This definition is similar to that found in (Smith, 2001) who writes:
The return rate is similar to that of comparable studies (e.g. Smith *et al*. 1999).
The approach used in this investigation is similar to that used by other researchers
Numerous studies have compared Xs in humans and animals and found that they are essentially identical.

The mode of processing used by the right brain	is similar to that is comparable to that is comparable in complexity to that	used by the left brain.

Comparison within one sentence using subordinating adverbs

Oral societies tend to be more concerned with the present	whereas while	literate societies have a very definite awareness of the past.

Whereas While	oral societies tend to be more concerned with the present,	literate societies have a very definite awareness of the past.

Comparison within one sentence using prepositional phrases

In contrast to Compared with	people in oral cultures,	people in literate cultures organise their lives around clocks and calendars.

Comparison within one sentence using contrastive verbs

This interpretation	contrasts with that differs from that is different from that	of Smith and Jones (2004) who argue that ...

Comparison within one sentence using comparative forms

In the trial, women made fewer errors than men.
Women tend to have greater/less verbal fluency than men.
Adolescents are more/less likely to be put to sleep by alcohol than adults.
Further, men are more/less accurate in tests of target-directed motor skills.
Women tend to perform better/worse than men on tests of perceptual speed.
Women are faster/slower than men at certain precision manual tasks, such as ...
The part of the brain connecting the two hemispheres may be more/less extensive in women.
Women are more/less likely than men to suffer aphasia when the front part of the brain is damaged.

Women	are more/less likely to perform well are more/less accurate in tests of X make more/fewer errors in tests of X may be more/less susceptible to X tend to perform better/worse in tests of X tend to have greater/less verbal fluency	than men.

Indicating difference across two sentences

It is very difficult to get away from calendar time in literate societies	By contrast, In contrast, On the other hand,	many people in oral communities have little idea of the calendar year of their birth.

According to some studies, X is represented as … (Smith, 2012; Davis, 2014)	Others propose … (Jones, 2014; Brown, 2015)

Smith (2013) found that X accounted for 30% of Y.	Other researchers, however, who have looked at X, have found ... Jones (2010), for example, ...

Zhao (2002) reports that ...	However, Smith's (2010) study of Y found no ...

Indicating similarity across two sentences

Young children learning their first language need simplified input.	Similarly, Likewise, In the same way,	low level adult L2 learners need graded input supplied in most cases by a teacher.

Smith argues that ... Al-Masry (2003) sees X as ...	Similarly, Likewise, In the same vein,	Jones (2013) asserts that ... Wang (2012) holds the view that ... Smith (1994) in his book XYZ notes ...

Defining Terms

In academic work, students are often expected to give definitions of key words and phrases in order to demonstrate to their tutors that they understand these terms clearly. Academic writers generally, however, define terms so that their readers understand exactly what is meant when certain key terms are used. When important words are not clearly understood misinterpretation may result. In fact, many disagreements (academic, legal, diplomatic, personal) arise as a result of different interpretations of the same term. In academic writing, teachers and their students often have to explore these differing interpretations before moving on to study a topic.

Introductory phrases:
Historically, the term X has been used to describe …
It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by ...
The definition of X has been a matter of ongoing discussion among …
This shows a need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by the word X.
The definitions of these Xs vary in the literature and there is terminological confusion.
X is a term frequently used in the literature, but to date there is no consensus about ...

Simple three-part definitions

A university is	an institution	where knowledge is produced and passed on to others.
Social Economics may be defined as	the branch of economics	[which is] concerned with the measurement, causes, and consequences of social problems.
Research may be defined as	a systematic process	which consists of three elements or components: (1) a question, problem, or hypothesis, (2) data, and (3) analysis and interpretation of data.
Education is	a form of learning	in which the knowledge, skills , or values of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next.
A scientific theory can be defined as	a well-confirmed explanation	[which has been] arrived at by following scientific principles.
Braille is	a system	of touch reading and writing for blind people in which raised dots on paper represent the letters of the alphabet.
Science is	the systematic study of	the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.

General meanings or application of meanings
The term X refers to ...
The term X encompasses A), B), and C).
X can be defined as ... It encompasses ...
X can be loosely described as a correlation.
The term X has come to be used to refer to ...
The term X is generally understood to mean ...
In the literature, the term tends to be used to refer to ...
The broad use of the term X is sometimes equated with ...
Whereas X refers to the operations of ..., Y refers to the ...
The term X has been applied to situations where students ...
The term disease refers to a biological event characterised by ...
The term X is a relatively new name for a Y, commonly referred to...
In broad biological terms, X can be defined as any stimulus that is ...
Defined as XYZ, obesity is now considered a worldwide epidemic and is associated with ...

Indicating difficulties in defining a term
A generally accepted definition of X is lacking.
Unfortunately, X remains a poorly defined term.
The term X embodies a multitude of concepts which ...
There is a degree of uncertainty around the terminology in ...
A further definition is given by Smith (1982) who describes ...
In the field of language teaching, various definitions of X are found.
These terms are often used interchangeably and without precision.
Numerous terms are used to describe X, the most common of which are ….
Smith (2001) identified four abilities that might be subsumed under the term X: a) ...
Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that X refers to ...
X is a commonly-used notion in language learning and yet it is a concept difficult to define precisely.

Specifying terms that are used in an essay or thesis
The term X will be used solely when referring to ...
In the present report, X was therefore defined in terms of ...
In this essay, the term X will be used in its broadest sense to refer to all ...
In this paper, the term that will be used to describe this phenomenon is X.
In this dissertation, the terms X and Y are used interchangeably to mean ...
Throughout this thesis, the term education is used to refer to informal systems as well as ...
While a variety of definitions of the term X have been suggested, this paper will use the definition first suggested by Smith (1968) who saw it as ...

Referring to people's definitions: author prominent
For Smith (2001), fluency means/refers to ...
Smith (2001) uses the term 'fluency' to refer to ...
Smith (1954) was apparently the first to use the term ...
The term 'fluency' is used by Smith (2001) to refer to ...
Macro-stabilisation policy is defined by Smith (2003: 119) as '... ...'
This definition is close to those of Smith (2012) and Jones (2013) who define X as …
In 1987, sports psychologist John Smith popularized the term 'X' to describe ...
According to a definition provided by Smith (2001:23), fluency is 'the maximally ...
Aristotle defines the imagination as 'the movement which results upon an actual sensation.'
One of the first people to define nursing was Florence Nightingale (1860), who wrote: '... ...'
Chomsky writes that a grammar is a 'device of some sort for producing the ....' (1957, p.11).

Smith, has shown that, as late as 1920, Jones was using the term 'X' to refer to particular ...
The term 'matter' is used by Aristotle in four overlapping senses. First, it is the underlying ...
Smith *et al.* (2002) have provided a new definition of health: 'health is a state of being with …

Referring to people's definitions: author non-prominent
Validity is the degree to which an assessment process or device measures what it is intended to measure (Smith *et al.*, 1986)

Commenting on a definition

This definition	includes ... allows for ... highlights the ... helps distinguish ... takes into account … poses a problem for ... will continue to evolve. can vary depending on ... was agreed upon after ... is intended primarily for … has been broadened to include ...

The following definition is	intended to ... modelled on … too simplistic. useful because ... problematic as ... rather imprecise. inadequate since ... in need of revision since ... important for what it excludes. the most precise produced so far.

What is	useful striking notable important appealing interesting distinctive troubling significant remarkable	about this definition is	that it offers … that it stresses … its concern with … the emphasis on … that it is based on … that it recognises … that it clearly links … that it acknowledges … that it takes for granted … that it encompasses all … what it does not include …

Describing Trends and Projections

A trend is the general direction in which something is developing or changing over time. A projection is a prediction of future change. Trends and projections are usually illustrated using line graphs in which the horizontal axis represents time. Some of the language commonly used for writing about trends and projections is given below.

Describing trends

The graph shows that there has been a Figure 2 reveals that there has been a	slight gradual slow steady marked steep sharp	growth increase rise decrease fall decline drop	in the number of divorces in England and Wales since 1981.

Describing high and low points in figures

Oil production peaked in 1985.
Gas production reached a (new) low in 1990
The peak age for committing a crime is 18.
The number of live births outside marriage reached a peak during the Second World War.

Projecting trends

The rate of Z The amount of Y The number of Xs	is likely to is projected to is expected to will probably	fall grow increase level off drop sharply remain steady decline steadily	after 2020.

Describing Quantities

The language for writing about quantities can be a complex area for non-native speakers because there are many combinations of short grammar words, such as prepositions and pronouns, and these can easily be confused. Many of the phrases given below also contain approximators such as: *nearly, approximately, over half, less than, just over.*

Describing fractions and percentages

Nearly half of the respondents (48%) agreed that ...
Approximately half of those surveyed did not comment on ...
Less than a third of those who responded (32%) indicated that ...
The number of first marriages in the United Kingdom fell *by nearly two-fifths.*
Of the 148 patients who completed the questionnaire, *just over half* indicated that ...

70% of those who were interviewed indicated that ...
The incidence of X has been estimated *as 10%* following …
Since 1981, England has experienced an *89% increase* in crime.
The response rate was *60% at six months* and 56% at 12 months.
In 1960 *just over 5%* of live births in 1960 were outside marriage.
Returned surveys from 34 radiologists yielded *a 34% response rate*.
He also noted that *less than 10% of* the articles included in his study cited ...
With each year of advancing age, the probability of having X *increased by 9.6%* (p = 0.006).
The mean income of *the bottom 20 percent* of U.S. families declined from $10,716 in 1970 to ...
X found that of 2,500 abortions, 58% were in young women aged 15-24, *of whom 62%* were ...

Well over Much more than More than Just over Around Approximately Almost Just under Less than Much less than Well under	half a third a quarter 70% 50% 40%	of those surveyed of the respondents of those who responded	agreed that … indicated that … did not respond to this question.

Describing averages

The average of 12 observations in the X, Y and Z is 19.2 mgs/m ...
Roman slaves probably had a *lower than average life expectancy*.
This figure can be seen as the *average life expectancy* at various ages.
The proposed model suggests a steep decline *in mean life expectancy* ...
The mean age of Xs with coronary atherosclerosis was 48.3 ± 6.3 years.
Mean estimated age at death was 38.1 ± 12.0 years (ranging from 10 to 60+ years)
*The mean score f*or the two trials was subjected to multivariate analysis of variance to determine ...
The *mean income* of the bottom 20 percent of U.S. families declined from $10,716 in 1970 to ...

Roman slaves probably had a	*much lower than average* life expectancy.
The Roman nobility probably had a	*much higher than average* life expectancy.

Describing ranges

The respondents had practised for an average of 15 years (range 6 to 35 years).
The participants were aged 19 to 25 and were from both rural and urban backgrounds.
Rates of decline ranged from 2.71– 0.08 cm day (Table 11) with a mean of 0.97 cm day.
They calculated ranges of journal use from 10.7%–36.4% for the humanities, 25%–57% for ...
The evidence shows that life expectancy from birth lies in the range of twenty to thirty years.
The mean income of the bottom 20 percent of U.S. families declined from $10,716 to $9,833.
Most estimates of X range from 200.000 to 700.000 and, in some cases, up to a million or more.
At between 575 and 590 metres depth, the sea floor is extremely flat, with an average slope of ...

Describing ratios and proportions

Singapore has *the highest proportion* of millionaire households.
The annual birth rate dropped from 44.4 to 38.6 per 1000 per annum.
East Anglia had *the lowest proportion* of lone parents at only 14 per cent.
The proportion of live births outside marriage reached *one in ten* in 1945.
The proportion of the population attending emergency departments was 65% higher in X than ...

Explaining Causality

A great deal of academic work involves understanding and suggesting solutions to problems. At postgraduate level, particularly in applied fields, students search out problems to study. In fact, one could say that problems are the raw material for a significant proportion of academic activity. However, solutions cannot be suggested unless the problem is fully analysed, and this involves a thorough understanding of the causes. Some of the language that you may find useful for explaining causes and effects is listed below.

Verbs indicating causality

Lack of protein	may cause can lead to can result in can give rise to	mental impairment.

Scurvy is a disease	caused by resulting from stemming from	lack of vitamin C.

Much of the instability in X	stems from is caused by is driven by can be attributed to	the economic effects of the war.

Nouns indicating causality

One *reason* why Xs have declined is that ...
A *consequence* of vitamin A deficiency is blindness.
X can have profound health *consequences* for older people.
The most likely *causes* of X are poor diet and lack of exercise.
The *causes* of X have been the subject of intense debate within ...

Prepositional phrases indicating causality

Around 200,000 people per year become deaf	owing to because of as a result of as a consequence of	a lack of iodine.

Sentence connectors indicating causality

If undernourished children do survive to become adults, they have decreased learning ability.	Therefore, Consequently, Because of this, As a result (of this),	when they grow up, it will probably be difficult for them to find work

Adverbial elements indicating causality

Malnutrition leads to illness and a reduced ability to work in adulthood,	thus	perpetuating the poverty cycle.
The warm air rises above the surface of the sea,	thereby	creating an area of low pressure

Nouns indicating contributing agency
Extreme loneliness is a risk factor for X.
X and Y are important driving factors of Z.
X is almost as strong a risk factor for disability as Y.
X is generally seen as a factor strongly related to Y.
This work has revealed several factors that are responsible for …
The study found that loneliness has twice the impact on early death as obesity does.

X is a key *factor* in …
X is a major *influence* on …
X has a positive *effect* on …
X has a significant *impact* on …
X is an important *determinant* of …

X is a/an	risk common dominant predictive important significant underlying contributing confounding complicating	factor	in … for …

Verbs indicating contributing agency

X has contributed to the decline in …
It is now understood that X plays an important role in …
A number of factors play a role in determining the effects of …
The mixing of X and Y exerts a powerful effect upon Z through...
Recent research has revealed that X has a detrimental effect on …
A number of factors are known to affect the volume and type of …
X is only one of many factors that help to determine the quality of …

Several factors are known to	inhibit X. affect X. shape X. predict X. increase X. influence X. determine X. affect the rate of … be associated with … increase the risk of … be partially responsible for … play a role in determining X .

Verbs describing activity to understand causes

Few studies Many studies Previous studies	have	analysed explored described examined addressed investigated	the causes of X.

Possible cause and effect relationships expressed tentatively

X appears to be linked to …
This suggests a weak link may exist between X and Y.
The use of X may be linked to behaviour problems in ...
The human papilloma virus is linked to most cervical cancer.

X may be associated with …
There is some evidence that X may affect Y.
In the literature, X has been associated with Y.
It is not yet clear whether X is made worse by Y.
The findings indicate that regular exercise could improve …
A high consumption of X could be associated with infertility.
X in many cases may be associated with certain bacterial infections.

X may	have	caused Y. given rise to Y. brought about Y. been an important factor in Y. contributed to the increase in Y. been caused by an increase in Y. played a vital role in bringing about Y.

X may have been	due to Y. caused by Y. attributed to Y. brought about by Y.

Giving Examples as Support

Writers may give specific examples as evidence to support their general claims or arguments. Examples can also be used to help the reader or listener understand unfamiliar or difficult concepts, and they tend to be easier to remember. For this reason, they are often used in teaching. Finally, students may be required to give examples in their work to demonstrate that they have understood a complex problem or concept. It is important to note that when statements are supported with examples, the explicit language signalling this may not always be used.

Examples as the main information in a sentence

A An	notable classic useful important prominent well-known	example of X is ....

For example, the word 'doctor' used to mean a 'learned man'.
For example, Smith and Jones (2004) conducted a series of semi-structured interviews in ...
Young people begin smoking for a variety of reasons. They may, for example, be influenced by ....

Another example of what is meant by X is ...
This is exemplified in the work undertaken by ...
This distinction is further exemplified in studies using ...
An example of this is the study carried out by Smith (2004) in which ...
The effectiveness of the X technique has been exemplified in a report by Smith *et al.* (2010).

This is evident in the case of ...
This is certainly true in the case of ...
The evidence of X can be clearly seen in the case of ...
In a similar case in America, Smith (1992) identified ...
This can be seen in the case of the two London physics laboratories which ...

X is a good illustration of ...
X illustrates this point clearly.
This can be illustrated briefly by ...
By way of illustration, Smith (2003) shows how the data for ...
These experiments illustrate that X and Y have distinct functions in ...

Examples as additional information in a sentence
Young people begin smoking for a variety of reasons, *such as* pressure from peers and the role model of parents.
Pavlov found that if some other stimulus, *for example* the ringing of a bell, preceded the food, the dog would start salivating.
In Paris, Gassendi kept in close contact with many other prominent scholars, *such as* Kepler, Galileo, Hobbes, and Descartes.

The prices of resources, *such as* copper, iron ore, oil, coal and aluminium, have declined in real terms over the past 20 years.
Many diseases can result at least in part from stress*, including*: arthritis, asthma, migraine, headaches and ulcers.

Reporting cases as support
This case has shown that ...
This has been seen in the case of ...
The case reported here illustrates the ...
Overall, these cases support the view that ...
This case study confirms the importance of ...
The evidence presented thus far supports the idea that ...
This case demonstrates how X used innovative marketing strategies in ...
As this case very clearly demonstrates, it is important that ...
This case reveals the need for further investigation in patients with ...
This case demonstrates the need for better strategies for ...
In support of X, Y has been shown to induce Y in several cases (Smith *et al.*, 2001).
Recent cases reported by Smith *et al.* (2013) also support the hypothesis that ...

Signalling Transition

Previewing what is to follow in a paper or dissertation is like showing a map to a driver; it enables them to see where they are going. So it is useful to think of a preview section as a 'road map' for the reader. It must be accurate, but it must be easy to follow.

Writers are also expected to indicate to the reader when they are moving from one topic to another, or from on section of text to another. These are known as transition statements and examples of these, together with some previewing statements, are given below.

Previewing sections of text
In this chapter, I describe the data collection procedures and …
The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on X. It begins by ...
This introductory section provides a brief overview of ... It then goes on to ...
This part of the thesis discusses the findings which emerged from the statistical analysis presented in the previous chapter.
This chapter describes and discusses the methods used in this investigation. The first section ... The second part moves on to describe in greater detail the ...
The final chapter of this dissertation is divided into two parts. The first ...
This chapter is divided into four main sections, each of which presents the results relating to one of the research questions.
The structure and biological functions of Xs will be discussed in the forthcoming sections.

Introducing a new topic or aspect of a topic
Regarding X, ...
As regards X, ...
In terms of X, ...
In the case of X ...
With regard to X, ...
With respect to X, ...
As far as X is concerned, ...
Another important aspect of X is …

Reintroducing a topic
As explained earlier, ...
As discussed above, ...
As described on the previous page, ...
As explained in the introduction, it is clear that ...
As was pointed out in the introduction to this paper, ...
As was mentioned in the previous chapter, ...
Returning (briefly) to the (subject/issue) of X, ...

Moving from one section to the next
Before proceeding to examine X, it will be necessary to ...
Before employing these theories to examine X, it is necessary to ...
Having defined what is meant by X, I will now move on to discuss ...
So far this paper/chapter has focussed on X. The following section will discuss ...
Having discussed how to construct X, the final section of this paper addresses ways of ...
This section has analysed the causes of X and has argued that ... The next part of this paper will ...

This chapter has demonstrated that ... It is now necessary to explain the course of ...
Turning now to the experimental evidence on ...
This (chapter) follows on from the previous (chapter), which (examined/laid out/outlined) X.

Moving from one section to the next whilst indicating addition, contrast or opposition
Another significant aspect of X is …
In addition, it is important to ask ...
Despite this, little progress has been made in the ...
However, this system also has a number of serious drawbacks.
On the other hand, in spite of much new knowledge about the role of ...,

Previewing a following section
The following is a brief report on a ...
In the section that follows, it will be argued that ...
What follows is a description/outline/account of …
The problem of X is discussed in the following section.
The next chapter describes synthesis and evaluation of ...
This raises questions about X which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Transition statements for results and discussion
Turning now to the experimental evidence on ...
Comparing the two results, it can be seen that ...
A comparison of the two results reveals ...
As pointed out in the introduction to this paper, ...
From the previous discussion, it can be seen that ...
It is also worth noting that X is significantly more frequent in ...
The differences between X and Y are highlighted in Table 4.

Summary and preview
This section has reviewed the three key aspects of ...
This chapter has described the methods used in this investigation and it has ...
The next chapter describes the procedures and methods used in this investigation …
This chapter began by describing X and arguing that ... It went on to suggest that the ...
In this section, it has been explained that ...The chapter that follows moves on to consider the...
These analytical procedures and the results obtained from them are described in the next chapter.
In the next section, I will present some of the findings of my empirical research on the impact of ...
A summary of the main findings and of the principal issues and suggestions which have arisen in this discussion are provided in the next chapter, which ...

In the next section In the section that follows In the chapter that follows	I we	(briefly)	review … examine … explain … describe … present … argue that … comment on … provide an account of … use the results obtained to discuss …

The section below The following section The next chapter	reviews examines … explains … describes … presents … discusses … draws together …

Writing about the Past

Writing about the past in English is made difficult by the rather complex tense system. However, the phrases grouped below give an indication of the uses of the main tenses in academic writing. For a comprehensive explanation of the uses of the various tenses you will need to consult a good English grammar book. A good recommendation is *Practical English Usage* by Michael Swan, Oxford University Press.

Time phrases associated with the use of the simple past tense: specific times or periods of time in the past, completed

In 1933, During the Nazi period, Between 1933 and 1945, From 1933 to 1945, In the 1930s and 1940s,	restrictions were placed on German academics.

For centuries, Throughout the 19th century, At the start of the 19th century, At the beginning of the 19th century, In the early years of the 19th century, In the latter half of the 19th century, Towards the end of the 19th century, At the end of the nineteenth century, In the second half of the 19th century,	church authorities placed restrictions on academics.

Following World War I,	Fleming actively searched for anti-bacterial agents.
Half a century later,	Fleming was named one of the *100 Most Important People* of the century.
In 1999,	

Time phrases associated with the use of the present perfect tense: past and present connected

To date, little evidence has been found associating X with Y.
Up to now, the research has tended to focus on X rather than on Y.
So far, three factors have been identified as being potentially important: X, Y, and Z.
Since 1965, these four economies have doubled their share of world production and trade.

Until recently, there has been little interest in X.
Recently, these questions have been addressed by researchers in many fields.
In recent years, researchers have investigated a variety of approaches to X but ...
More recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings about ...

The past decade has seen the rapid development of X in many ...
Over the past 30 years there has been a significant increase in ...
Over the past century there has been a dramatic increase in ...
Over the past few decades, the world has seen the stunning transformation of X, Y and Z.

The present perfect tense may also be used to describe research or scholarly activity that has taken place recently

Several studies have revealed that ...
Previous studies of X have not dealt with ...
A considerable amount of literature has been published on X.
Invasive plants have been identified as major contributing factors for the decline of ....
The relationship between X and Y has been widely investigated (Smith, 1985, Jones, ...
There have been several investigations into the causes of illiteracy (Smith, 1985; Jones, 1987).
The new material has been shown to enhance cooling properties (Smith, 1985, Jones, 1987).

For reference to single investigations or publications in the past the simple past tense is used

An experimental demonstration of this effect was first carried out by ...
The first experimental realisation of ..., by Smith *et al.* [12], used a ...
The first systematic study of X was reported by Patel *et al.* in 1986.
Smith and Jones (1994) were the first to describe X, and reported that ...
X as originally isolated from Y in a soil sample from ... (Wang *et al.*, 1952).

In 1975, Smith *et al.* published a paper in which they described ...
In the 1950s, Gunnar Myrdal pointed to some of the ways in which ...
In 1981, Smith and co-workers demonstrated that X induced in vitro resistance to ...
In 1984, Jones *et al.* made several amino acid esters of X and evaluated them as ...
In 1990, Patel *et al.* demonstrated that replacement of H2O with heavy water led to ...
Thirty years later, Smith (1974) reported three cases of Candida Albicans which ...

Notes on academic writing

A note on academic style

The principal characteristics of written academic style are listed below.

1. Evidence-based

Perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of written academic style is that it is evidence-based. Writers support their arguments and claims with evidence from the body of knowledge relevant to their discipline. In addition, any research that is undertaken, must make reference to previous work in the field. As a result, academic texts are rich in attributions to other writers and references to previous research, as seen in the examples below:

- *Previous studies have shown that ...*
- *These sources suggest that from the fifth century onwards ....*
- *According to the 1957 Annual Medical Report, the death of the 960 inhabitants of ...*
- *However, as has been shown elsewhere (e.g. Smith, 1992), the increase in ...*

For further examples, refer to the section on ***Referring to the Literature*** in this document***.***

In addition, general propositions are usually supported with real examples.

- *This can be seen in the case of ...*
- *A good example of this can be found in ...*

2. Words of classical origin

Unlike everyday English, academic writing is characterised by a high frequency of words of classical origin (Greek and Latin). The main reason for this is that Latin was the *lingua academica* during the European renaissance; in other words, it was the international language of scholars. Even up until relatively recently, great works of science, such as Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687), were written in Latin. Where academic texts were written in English, words of classical origin were used for concepts and phenomena for which there was no equivalent in English.

Although the *lingua academica* of today is English, writers of academic English still tend to use words which are derived from Latin, and also, mainly through Latin, from Greek.

everyday words		academic words
worry		concern
story		account
get rid of		eradicate
a lot of	→	considerable
not enough		insufficient
trouble		difficulty
big		significant
way (of doing)		method
bring together		synthesise
thing		object

There are also some changes to grammatical words (though these are not of classical origin):

everyday words		academic words
not much research	→	little research
not many studies		few studies
isn't any evidence		no evidence

3. Cautious
Academic writers are careful about the claims they make: they take care not to appear certain where some doubt may exist, and they are careful not to over-generalise. An example of this kind of transformation can be seen below. The second sentence is in academic style:

- *Drinking alcohol causes breast cancer in women.* →
- *Some studies suggest that drinking alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer.*

For more examples of this kind of language, refer to the section on ***Being Cautious***.

4. Impersonal
In the interests of objectivity, academic writers tend to remove themselves from the writing. The focus is on 'what' happened, 'how' it was done and 'what' was found. The 'who' (the writer) is not normally given very much attention. This is one of the reasons why personal pronouns ('I' and 'we') tend not to be used. In addition, academic texts rarely address the reader directly and the pronoun normally used for this, 'you', is avoided.

- *You could say that Churchill made some catastrophic decisions early in the War* →
- *It can be said that Churchill made some catastrophic decisions early in the War*

There are some exceptions: in certain disciplines, it may be appropriate for a writer to explain their personal interest in the research area. In some disciplines, the researcher may participate in the research as a participant-observer. In these cases, 'I' will be used. The example below, which illustrates the former situation, is taken from a dissertation in History.

> *I became interested in X after reading …… I hope to convey some of my fascination for the subject, as well as expressing my admiration of the artistic achievements of those involved*

In research undertaken by teams, for example in medicine and science, it is common for the research to be reported using the personal pronoun 'we'.

5. Nominalisation
There is a tendency for academic writers to transform verbs (actions) into nouns. In the example below, the verb 'abandoned' becomes the abstract noun 'abandonment'.

- *Unwanted Roman children were generally abandoned in a public place.* →
- *The abandonment of unwanted Roman children generally occurred in a public place.*

As a result of this kind of transformation, academic writing is characterised by long noun phrase constructions, as in: 'the abandonment of unwanted Roman children'. In certain cases, these nominalised forms can become long and complex:

- *the effect of reducing aggressiveness by producing an ACTH-mediated condition of decreased androgen levels*

Although this kind of construction is considered normal in scientific writing, unless the reader is familiar with the constructions, it does make reading difficult as there are so many pieces of information to process in the one sentence. There is an argument that too much nominalisation should be discouraged.

6. Rhetorical questions
Questions to introduce significant new ideas are avoided, and are replaced with statements:

- *Is the welfare system good or not?* →

- *It is important to consider the effectiveness of the British welfare system.*

7. Contracted forms avoided
Contracted forms (e.g. *it's, don't, isn't, aren't*) should not be used in academic writing. The only exception would be if you are transcribing a recorded conversation or interview.

8. Precise and detailed
Last of all, one of the most noticeable features of academic writing is that it is very precise and detailed. This relates to the setting out and development of the thinking and the ideas as well as to the language used in the writing.

A note on commonly confused words

Your spell checker will only indicate words that are misspelt and which it does not recognise. However, if a misspelling results in a word which has another meaning or use, the spellchecker will not show this to you. Here is a list of words which are commonly confused:

abbreviation/acronym
An *abbreviation* is a shortened form of a word or phrase. Usually, but not always, it consists of a letter or group of letters taken from the word or phrase. *Dr*. and *Prof*. are common examples. An *acronym* is an abbreviation formed from the initial components in a phrase or a word. These elements in turn form a new word: *NATO, Benelux, UNESCO.*

affect/effect
Affect is a verb, e.g. *A affects B*;
Effect is a noun and is therefore always used after an article/determiner ('an' or 'the'/'this'), e.g. *The Greenhouse Effect*.

compliment/complement
Compliment (verb) means to praise someone. *Complement* (verb) means to complete something in a way that makes it very good. Both words can also be used as nouns.

comprise/consist
Both words mean 'to be made up of', but only consist is accompanied by *of.*

discrete/discreet
Discrete is an adjective which means 'separate' or 'distinct'. *Discreet* is an adjective which means 'to keep silent or tactful about something'.

formerly/formally
Formerly means 'earlier'. *Formally* means 'conventionally' or 'officially'.

i.e./e.g.
i.e. is the abbreviation for *id est* which mean 'that is' or 'in other words'.
e.g. is the abbreviation for *exempli gratia* which has the same meaning as 'for example' and 'for instance'.

its/it's
its – without an apostrophe - is a possessive determiner similar to 'my' or 'your' .
it's is a contracted form of 'it is' or 'it has' . Note, however, that contracted forms are avoided in academic writing.

later/latter
Later is an adverb which means 'at an advanced point of time'. *Latter* is an adjective used to refer to items listed in a text. It means 'most recently mentioned'; in other words, the last item.

practice/practise
In British English, *practice* is a noun and *practise* is a verb. American English allows both spellings for both forms.

precede/proceed
Precede means 'to come before'. *Proceed* means 'to go forward' or 'to begin to carry out'.

principle/principal
Principle is a noun which means ‘a basic belief, theory or rule’. *Principal* is an adjective which means ‘main’ or ‘most important’.

there/their
There is used to indicate the existence of something. *Their* is used to indicate possession, i.e. if something belongs to someone or something.

prescribe/proscribe
Prescribe means to advise or authorise the use of something. *Proscribe* means to forbid or to restrict.

A note on British and US spelling

The most common difference which is noticed in academic writing concerns verbs which end in *ise/yse* Br. or *ize/yze* US:

- *analyse* Br. v *analyze* US.
- *industrialise* Br. v *industrialize* US.

This difference also affects the nouns derived from the verbs:

- *organisation* Br. v *organization* US.
- *globalisation* Br. v *globalization* US.

Another noticeable difference relates to words ending in *re*:

- *centre* Br. v *center* US.
- *metre* Br. v *meter* US.

Here are some other differences:

British		US
aeroplane		*airplane*
analogue		*analog*
behaviour		*behavior*
catalogue		*catalog*
colour		*color*
connection		*connexion*
defence		*defense*
endeavour		*endeavour*
encyclopaedia		*encyclopedia*
fibre		*fiber*
foetus		*fetus*
instalment		*installment*
labour		*labor*
paediatric		*pediatric*
plough		*plow*
programme		*program*
rigour		*rigor*
sceptical		*skeptical*
skilful		*skillful*
travelled		*traveled*

If you are writing for a British university or a British journal, you should use the British spelling.

A note on punctuation

As the purpose of punctuation is to make written English easier to read and to make the meaning clear and unambiguous, good, accurate punctuation is important in academic writing. The following notes highlight points of particular relevance to academic writing.

1. Full stop .

- To indicate the end of a sentence
- To indicate an abbreviation such as *etc., et al.* (not always used)
- To indicate an omission in a quoted text [**...**]

2. Comma ,

- To separate two main parts of a sentence joined by words such as *and, or, but,*
- To separate a dependent part of a sentence (beginning with words such as *although, when, because*) from the main part, particularly if the dependent part comes first in the sentence
- To indicate additional information*, however relevant it may be,* in a sentence (parenthesis)
- To indicate a non-defining relative clause*, which simply provides additional information,* in a sentence
- To separate items in a list such as *clauses, phrases, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs*

3. Colon :

- To introduce an explanation: *The reason the experiment failed was obvious: the equipment was faulty.*
- To introduce a list, particularly a grammatically complex list*:* see the example below under *semi-colon*
- To introduce a direct quotation, particularly a long one: *Jones (2003) states that: ‘ ’.*

4. Semi-colon ;

- To separate two sentences that are very closely connected in meaning (optional, in place of a full stop): *Some students prefer to write essays; others prefer to give presentations.*
- To separate clearly items in a grammatically complex list: *For Aristotle, motion* is of four kinds*: (1) motion which ...; (2) motion which ...; (3) motion which ...; and (4) motion which...*

5. Quotation marks ‘ ’ / “ ”

- To indicate a direct quotation
- To highlight words or phrases used in a special or unusual way: *Quotation marks are also called ‘inverted commas’.*

NB Single quotation marks now seem to be more commonly used than double. For quotations within quotations, use double quotation marks inside single (or single inside double).

6. Dash –

- Generally avoid in formal academic writing. Replace by colon, semi-colon, or brackets, as appropriate.

A note on article use

Articles use in English is a very complex area. However, there are a few simple rules which will help you in many situations and these are explained below:

1. Singular countable nouns

All singular countable nouns are always preceded by a small modifying word known in grammar as a determiner, and this is often an article (*a/an, the*). Countable words which are common in academic writing and which cause problems for non-native speakers of English, include: *system, model, method, approach, group, problem, effect, level, investigation, sector, study, participant, condition, category*

Note that even if these words are preceded by uncountable nouns or adjectives a determiner is still needed:

- *the greenhouse effect, the transport system, the control group*
- *a high level, a systematic approach, a rigorous study, an exploratory investigation*

2. Plural countable nouns

If the writer is thinking about a specific group, then the definite article is normally used: *The books in this collection were published in the 19th or early 20th century.*

Otherwise no article is used:

- *Learners tend to remember new facts when they are contextualised.*

3. Uncountable nouns

Uncountable nouns are not normally accompanied by an article:

- *Science has been defined as a systematic approach to answering questions.*
- *Reliability* is an important quality of any test.

But if they are post-modified by *of....,* or *which* … the definite article is normally used:

- *The science of global warming is a complex and controversial area.*
- *The reliability of this instrument is poor.*
- *Chemistry is the science which addresses the composition and behaviour of matter.*

4. Names

Names and titles are not normally preceded by the definite article (*the*)

- *Manchester University, Manchester*

But this changes if the noun phrase contains a post-modifying structure (*of …*)

- *The University of Manchester, The United States of America*

or if they contain words like *organisation, association or institute*

- *The World Health Organisation, The American Heart Association, The Royal Society. The SETI Institute*

Apart from these simple rules, the other thing you need to do is to check how noun phrases are used in the texts that you read. Make a mental note of this as you read, or check back to the source text when you are writing.

A note on sentence structure

1. Simple sentences

In written English, all sentences contain a Subject → Verb structure. The subject always precedes the verb, except in questions where the order is reversed.

S	V	
An electron	*is*	*an elementary particle.*

The subject may be one word, but it is usually a group of words centred around a noun. The verb, which can indicate an action, a state, or simply serve to link the subject to other information, may also consist of more than one word. Various other sentence elements may be placed before or after the Subject → Verb structure:

	S	V	
Between 1933 and 1945,	*restrictions*	*were placed*	*on German academics.*

It is common for the subject to consist of many words:

S	V	
The information on various types of wasps and bees in the report	*was*	*useful to environmentalists who were fighting the use of pesticides.*

Sometimes, however, the subject and verb can just be one word each**:**

S	V	
It	*is*	*almost certain that a lower speed limit will result in fewer injuries to pedestrians.*

These simple sentences always end in a full stop. In academic writing, however, many sentences are more complicated than this simple pattern.

2. Complex sentences

Many sentences contain more than one Subject → Verb structure, but one of these parts (known grammatically as clauses) will convey the main meaning and will make sense by itself:

Dependent part		Main part	
S	**V**	**S**	**V**
Although findings of recent research	*have shown X,*	*no controlled studies*	*have been reported.*

The main part of the sentence is also known as the independent part.

The main part of the sentence can also be placed before the dependent part.

Main part

S	V	
Oral societies	*tend to be*	*more concerned with the present*

Dependent part

	S	V	
whereas	*literate societies*	*have*	*a very definite awareness of the past.*

The dependent part of complex sentence is usually preceded by a word or phrase such as: *although, even though, if, even if, when, because, as, since, whereas, while.*

3. Compound sentences

Some sentences may have two Subject → Verb structures and both of these convey meaning that can make sense by itself; in other words, there are two main parts. The two parts may be joined by words like *and, or, but, so*, or by using a semi-colon (;) .

S	V	
Supporters of the 'Great Divide' theory	*agree*	*that something is lost as well as gained when people become literate,*

	S	V	
but	*they*	*consider*	*it is worth losing some benefits in order to obtain many others.*

4. Common problems relating to sentence structure

Problems occur in writing when dependent parts of sentences are written as complete sentences with a full stop:

- *Whereas literate societies have a very definite awareness of the past.* X
- *Although a number of studies have been undertaken.* X

Problems also occur when two independent parts are written as one sentence without a joining word.

- *Supporters of the 'Great Divide' theory agree that something is lost as well as gained when people become literate, they consider it is worth losing some benefits in order to obtain many others.* X

A note on paragraph structure

A pattern that can be identified in many well-written paragraphs is that of a controlling idea followed by supporting information. The controlling idea, sometimes referred to as the *topic sentence*, introduces a new idea, topic, argument or piece of information into the main text. This is then either explained further or supported by subsequent sentences. This structure can be represented schematically thus:

Topic Sentence (new point, expressed in general terms)
Supporting Information which may include a combination of: • an explanation or reason • reference to previous research • examples • quotations • statistics • specific aspects or details • a development in time • an effect or consequence

It is important that the explanatory or supporting information in a paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. If new points or ideas are to be stated, then these should be treated in a separate paragraph. It is also important that the explanatory or supporting information should not repeat the general ideas expressed in the topic sentence.

An example of the kind of paragraph structure suggested above is given below. Note the development from the general idea to the more detailed information. Also note the thematic linking, which is signalled by the words in bold, between the sentences. Each of these words and phrases links back to an idea introduced in the previous sentence. Here, the sentences have been separated.

Many children become interested in competitive sport at early ages.

Early involvement (prior to maturity) in **competitive sport** often exposes found individuals to types of stress that may affect their growth, producing a disruption of the normal growth pattern (Wang, 1978; Al Masry, 1998).

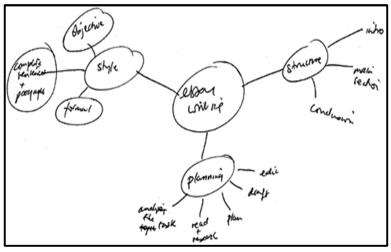
Among cyclists the most potentially serious of **these disorders** is likely to be increased thoracic curvature.

Cycling alters the anatomical position of the spine (to a flexed position) particularly the thoracic spine, and exposes the anterior portion of the vertebral column to higher compression (Smith, 1998; Jones, 2002).

A note on the writing process

So far this document has been about 'what we write'. This final section comprises a set of notes which are concerned with 'how' we write. It is organised into a series of helpful tips. Although only two pages are devoted to these ideas, together they have the potential to make a significant deference to the quality and quantity of your written output.

Tip No. 1. **The importance of planning**: Research has shown that experienced writers plan extensively. Initially, planning may involve simply generating ideas and exploring the relationships between them schematically, as in the diagram to the right. At a more advance stage of the planning process, a chapter outline of the thesis or dissertation will be necessary. This will become more detailed as you work on your study. You need to think of a writing plan as a road map. Without a map, you will probably lose your way or travel in circles.

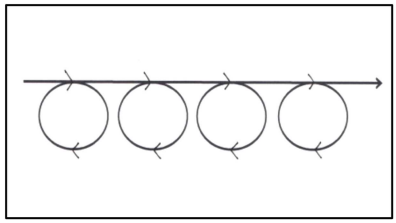


Tip No. 2. Getting started: Many writers suffer from 'writers' block'; they find it difficult to get started. One way of overcoming this is to give yourself a short period of time (say four minutes), and without stopping, write whatever comes into your mind about the topic. The important thing to do is to keep writing, or if you are using a keyboard, to keep typing. Don't worry about spelling of grammar – just keep producing words. You will be surprised at how much text you will produce and how many ideas are generated in such a short time. Now you can begin to organise the ideas you have produced, ensuring that they are written in logically developed and grammatically correct sentences.

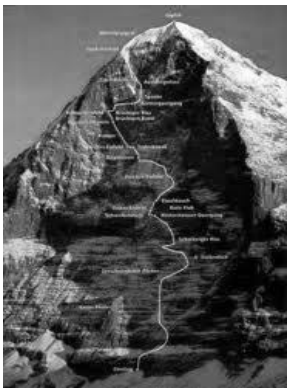
Tip No. 3. Be regular: You should timetable yourself so that you have a regular daily writing slot. This may seem obvious, but it is fundamental to ensuring the production of written text. Timetable a writing period each day, and aim to produce some text every time. How much you produce will vary, and what you produce, even if it is just a few paragraphs, may only be in the initial draft stage. This is not so important. The important thing is that the writing becomes a part of your daily routine. Simply getting your body to sit in front of a computer at a certain time each day will produce results.

Tip No. 4. Keep a notebook: When we are writing up a major piece of work, many ideas and insights come to us when we are not actually writing. Often, some of the most insightful ideas emerge when we are in a non-focussed cognitive state, such as when we are walking, running or swimming. Unless you can capture these ideas soon after they come to you, they may be lost. A small notebook and a pen is probably the best way to capture these thoughts before they disappear. The notebook itself can become a place where you develop the ideas and even start to formulate how the ideas will be developed in textual form.

Tip No. 5. **Understand the recursive process:** Writing at the academic level is not something we can do once and then leave. It is a recursive process. This means writers return to their initial texts, revising and redrafting them. This process is ongoing. In fact, many writers find it difficult to stop improving their writing, but with time being limited, they try to do as much as they can before the onset of a particular deadline. One thing we do know: successful writers write initial drafts, redraft, work on final drafts and then edit their work.



Tip No. 6. Stand back from your writing: Think of yourself as a mountain climber. Most climbers, during a climb, can only see a few feet in front of their faces. They cannot see the whole mountain. They can see other mountains, but not the one they are climbing. To do this they need to move a few kilometres away. At such a distance, they can see the route they are planning and they can see how their planned route moves up the mountain. As a writer, you should ask yourself: Is the route to the 'top' unbroken? Do all the minor 'steps' move upwards? Can the minor 'steps' be 'carried out' more clearly? The best way to create a sense of distance with your writing is with time: Leave it a few days, or longer, and comeback to your writing with fresh eyes and with a better sense of the overall structure.



Tip No. 7. Read your own writing: Read what you have written back to yourself, out loud if necessary, and ask yourself: i) do I understand what I have written? ii) does it sound natural? Reading your text out load is actually the best way of checking this. If what you have written doesn't sound right to you when you do this, it is probably badly written. One famous French writer (Gustav Flaubert) used to shout out his manuscripts before sending them off to be published. He claimed that bad writing never passed this simple test.

Tip No. 8. Talk about your writing: Writing is a very solitary activity and we tend not to talk about it to others. This is quite strange given that we spend so many hours on this activity. Asking another person to read some of what you have written and to give feedback can be a very useful experience; particularly if the feedback is reciprocal and both of you receive constructive criticism. It is worth bearing in mind that academic writers often receive their papers back from journal editors or publishers asking them to make changes. You might also consider forming a group of writers like yourself. Together you can read each other's writing and share the feedback.