

HOW TO WRITE AN ACADEMIC PAPER

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the guidelines to be followed while writing an academic paper (both Empirical and concept). The paper ends with a compilation of learning resources on academic writing .

Publishing is essential in this day and age. The bulk of academic publishing today is done in journals. It can look like a duty, but it

- ◆ usually makes a contribution to the body of knowledge in our field, and sometimes outside it
- ◆ makes ourselves known to our fellow scholars
- ◆ is essential for career progression
- ◆ has wider readership even in this digital world

Two broad categories of papers in humanities and social sciences are Empirical and Conceptual papers. They adopt different approaches but have the same starting point: An idea, usually arising from research we are doing or have done. In both formats, you must cite all your sources in your text and give the reference at the end.

EMPIRICAL PAPER

Literature survey start with a search, e.g. via JSTOR

- Your intention is to review the existing work on this area. This does NOT have to be a global survey.
- It can be restricted to location, the nature of the population you plan to survey, etc.
- Show why this area has not been covered in the literature you have surveyed.

Method (NOT methodology)

- You may need to specify a hypothesis, e.g. that school pupils' height is correlated with their exam success. This would probably need a control group and an experimental group.
- State why you have chosen your particular method, e.g. it is the most widely used in this field, or it is best suited for the area you have covered, etc.
- Specify the method. If sampling is needed, define the sampling frame and sampling method. For large populations, you may need to give confidence limits and/or significance levels.
- For numerical data, you may need to justify any tests you apply to the numbers, e.g. chi-square or other tests.
- Report of the investigation: specify and justify any diversions from procedure, e.g. a repeat test was not possible because it was close to exam time and the pupils went on study leave.

Discussion of your main findings

- Prioritize main findings
- Start with the main point you investigated, e.g. the correlation between pupils' height and exam success. Explain any connections or any lack of connections.
- Describe and explain any unexpected findings or findings from secondary analysis of your material.
- Do not give tables, maps, detailed calculations, etc here. Put those in the appendices.

Conclusions

- Give your main conclusions. These do not have to be decisive, and are often cautiously stated both in the social and the natural sciences.

Further research

Suggest a possible line of further research arising from your investigation, e.g. a possible link between nutrition levels and exam success.

Appendices

Tables, maps, survey questionnaires, detailed calculations, e.g. sampling method design or statistical tests.

REFERENCE**CONCEPTUAL PAPER**

Here, your paper is the literature survey and analysis of previous work on or around your area of interest.

Often we set out to establish a particular argument or a particular point for example Paper showing that many public policy interventions are based on a managerialist theory of cause and effect, and that the theory is incoherent and a threat to the idea of citizenship.

Approach

- ◆ Outline or summarize each book or paper you read, and evaluate it by reading further work on the same area or a related area, or on the same books or papers.
- ◆ Show how or why the material you read addresses your concerns, and evaluate it. It may not quite address your concerns, or may be incomplete, or may make unjustifiable assumptions.
- ◆ If you are drawing from a book, you should try to read all of it, but you may find only selected passages relevant to your concerns.
- ◆ If you use data or facts and figures, use only material which is significant for your argument, and cite the source as usual in your text and bibliography. This may be only one or two dates or numbers at a time.
- ◆ In order to evaluate each text, you will need to read further work on the same area or a related area.

Subheadings

When you read your draft, you may find that your text falls roughly into phases or sections of argument or analysis. At this point you can introduce subheadings.

Conclusions

In conceptual papers, these are not necessarily stated separately, but they can be.

If you have done the work thoroughly, you may find that your work opens up further questions, e.g. a paper on India's nuclear power generation policy may open this question: whether or not India should seek to generate and consume more energy in view of the environmental damage global energy consumption is causing. That is similar to the suggestion for further research at the end of an empirical paper.

E.RESOURCES ON WRITING TOR PUBLICATION :

Some excellent advice is available on the web, and a few selected items are,

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jan/03/how-to-get-published-in-an-academic-journal-top-tips-from-editors>

http://www.sagepub.in/upm-data/63382_how_to_get_published.pdf

<http://getalifephd.blogspot.in/2014/05/how-to-publish-article-in-academic.html>

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/how-to-get-your-first-research-paper-published/2015485.article>

Conculuding Remarks

Both conceptnal and Empirical papers have definite purpose, scope and structure. If the pointers suggested in this paper are judiciously followed, the quality of academic papers is bound to be better.