From Research to Writing

Before you start writing, consider...

Who is your audience?
- Is there a specific format they may expect?
- Can you organize your information in a way that will make a familiar reading pattern for them?
- Is there a type of language they may expect?
- What will they want to get from the final product?
- Are there specific sections of the final product they may pay particular attention to over others?

What is your topic?
- What does your audience already know about your topic?
- What may your audience need for you to explain about certain parts of your topic? (terms, jargon, abbreviations…)
- How may this topic affect them?

What is your purpose for writing this?
- Is it informative writing?
- Is it persuasive writing?
- Is it descriptive writing?...
- What qualities in your writing are necessary to meet that purpose effectively?

What voice are you using?
- Audience usually dictates voice.
- What are the social rules for the language you will be utilizing?
- Clarity is key.

Selecting Your Target Journal

Who is your discourse community? What are others in your academic community reading? Who wants to know more? Whose idea(s) are you building off of? Who wants to build on it? What institutions, granting agencies, professional associations… sponsor the journal(s)? Remember that your decision about where to submit your work ultimately determines who will have access to it.

Most journals post their audience/goals on their websites or in issue(s). Know which are the broad/general/popular publications and which are more specific/limited within your field. Example: Physics Today – semi-popular. Physical Review – sub-fields – atomic, molecular, and optical physics.

Read the journals. Read like a writer.
Components of a Strong Paper

Abstract – concise summary of the research article

Review of literature – annotated bibliography (present tense)
  • Give credit and other’s ideas
  • Gain credibility
  • Creates common ground/context

Hypothesis – assumption to be tested; provides a rationale for studying assumption.

Methods – detailed description of the procedures used in the research (past tense)
  • Population description
  • Data collection
  • Variables (if any)
  • Statistical analysis method

Results – report data using figures, charts, graphs… Emphasize reliability of the data (present tense)

Discussion/Conclusion – interpretation and analysis of research results. Further research needed. (present tense)

References – alphabetical list of research materials and articles cited in report.

Appendixes – section of materials too lengthy to include in the body of the paper.

Common Rhetorical Moves in Research Article Introductions
(Swales, 19990)

Move 1: Establish topic and significance (“establish a territory”)
  - by claiming that the topic is of central interest to the field and/or
  - by making generalization(s) about the topic and/or
  - by reviewing previous research

Move 2: Establish need for present research (“establish a niche”)
  - by indicating a gap in previous research or
  - by raising a question about previous research or
  - by proposing an extension of previous research

Move 3: Introduce the present research (“occupy the niche”)
  - by outlining the purpose and/or main features of the study (obligatory)
  - by describing the findings or conclusions of the study (optional)
  - by previewing the organization of the report (optional)