



An Introduction to Academic Writing

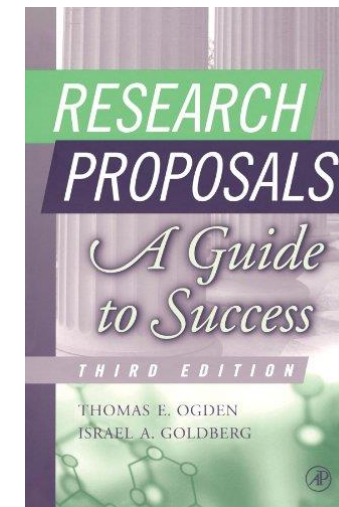
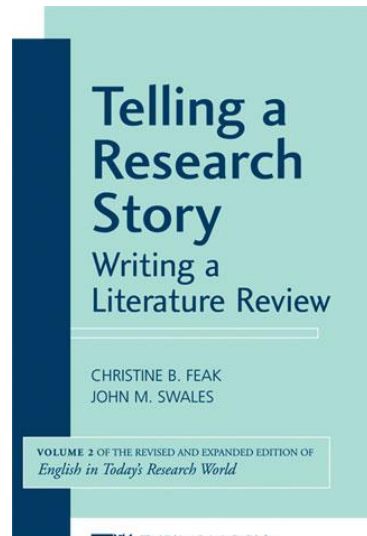
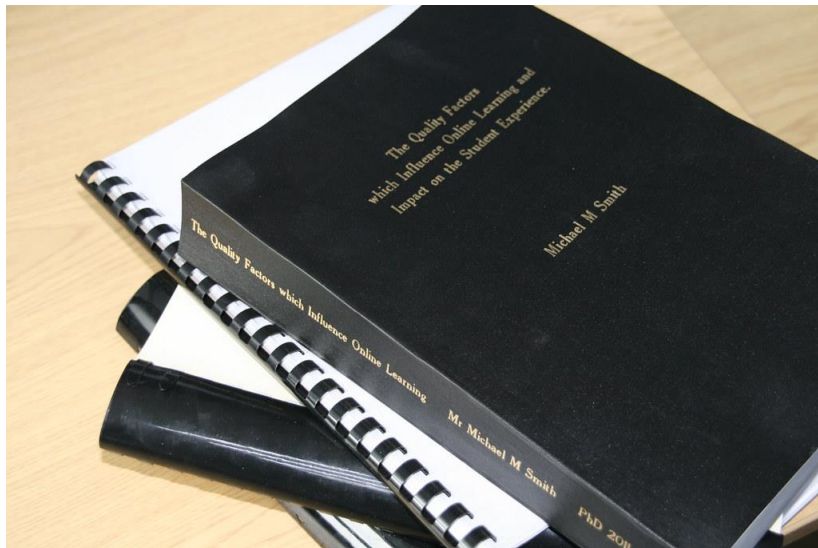
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Agenda

- ▶ Discuss academic writing and its features
- ▶ Visual comparison of academic writing to other types of writing
- ▶ Academic writing resources

Academic Writing Is...

- ▶ Academic writing is writing which communicates ideas, information and research to the wider academic community.
- ▶ There are many sub-genres that fall under the umbrella of academic writing, however, these sub-genres share similar features to one another.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network Statement on Point-of-Care Serology Testing in COVID-19

Respiratory Virus Infections Working Group*

Suggested citation: Respiratory Virus Infections Working Group. Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network Statement on Point-of-Care Serology Testing in COVID-19. Can Commun Dis Rep 2020;46(5):119-20. <https://doi.org/10.1483/cdr.v46i05119-20>

Keywords: COVID-19, point-of-care, serology testing, Canada, antibodies to SARS-CoV-2

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Introduction

Point-of-care (POC) serology testing for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19, detect the human antibody response to infection rather than the virus itself. Most POC serology tests are qualitative immunochromatographic (lateral-flow) based assays that detect immunoglobulin M and/or G in blood from a finger prick and can provide results in less than 30 minutes. While there is widespread interest in adopting POC serology tests for SARS-CoV-2, there are currently significant limitations to this testing modality, including the lack of understanding of the immunological response to COVID-19, limited clinical validation data and variability in performance among different POC tests.

Current position for use of point-of-care serology testing for acute diagnostics

The POC serology tests for SARS-CoV-2 have not currently been validated for use as a diagnostic tool for acute infection and none is approved by Health Canada to date. In general, these antibody tests often do not become positive until a week or more after symptoms have started and, therefore, are not suitable for diagnosis of acute SARS-CoV-2 infection at this time. We recommend that nucleic acid detection (e.g. real-time polymerase chain reaction, PCR) remains the first line test for the diagnosis of acute SARS-CoV-2 infection, as advised by the World Health Organization (1).

Where point-of-care serology testing could be used

At present, the use of serology in the diagnosis of acute SARS-CoV-2 infection and patient management is likely to be of limited utility. However, once the dynamics of the serological response to COVID-19 are better understood, serology will play an important role in the public health response. A key aspect of the use of serology testing is understanding whether antibody production correlates with protective immunity and what the duration of that protection is. The ease of use and turnaround time of POC assays make it an ideal testing modality in 1) remote areas with limited access to centralized laboratory-based testing and/or local laboratory infrastructure and

Key points relating to point-of-care serology testing

- It can take 7-10 days after symptom onset for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 to develop; therefore, the use of POC serology tests in the early phase of infection can result in false-negative results at a time when patients are most infectious (i.e. a negative result does not rule out infection). Since POC serology tests do not detect viral, a positive or negative result does not determine whether a person is infectious.
- Positive results may reflect either a past or present infection with SARS-CoV-2.
- False-positive results may occur if these kits cross react with antibodies from recent or past exposure to other coronaviruses, including human seasonal coronaviruses (HKU1, NL63, OC43, 229E), severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 1 (SARS-CoV-1) or Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Other infections, as well as non-infectious conditions (e.g. rheumatoid factor-positive diseases) may also cause false-positive results. All kits considered for use need to be thoroughly evaluated for such cross reactivity before being used clinically.
- False-negative results may occur in elderly and immunocompromised patients.

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Features of Academic Writing Include

- ▶ Formal
- ▶ Structured
- ▶ Evidenced-based
- ▶ Persuasive
- ▶ Critical
- ▶ Balanced
- ▶ Precise
- ▶ Objective
- ▶ Complex (in ideas, language, and sentence structure)

Academic Writing is Formal

- ▶ For the most part, academic writing uses American English as the standard way to communicate.
- ▶ American English is a tough phrase to unpack, mostly because people living in America speak in different dialects and vernaculars, and so “American English” as a descriptor doesn’t account for this.
- ▶ My suggestion in helping you get a better sense of what is meant by “American English” is to use the writing in your discipline/field as a model for how you should be writing your assignments.
- ▶ Additionally, colloquialisms, slang, and casual language aren’t typically used in academic American English.

Academic Writing is Structured

- ▶ Academic writing follows structures or formulas. These vary based on the genre of the writing and disciplinary expectations.
- ▶ Stylistic conventions influence the structure as well (APA, MLA, ACS, etc.) You will need to know your discipline's preferred stylistic conventions in order to write effectively for academic writing purposes.
- ▶ Many types/genres of academic writing follow an IMRAD structure. Introduction, **M**ethods, **R**esults and **D**iscussion.
- ▶ On the paragraph level, information tends to follow in a general to specific pattern.
- ▶ Headings and sub-headings are often used, as are figures and tables.

Academic Writing is Evidenced-based

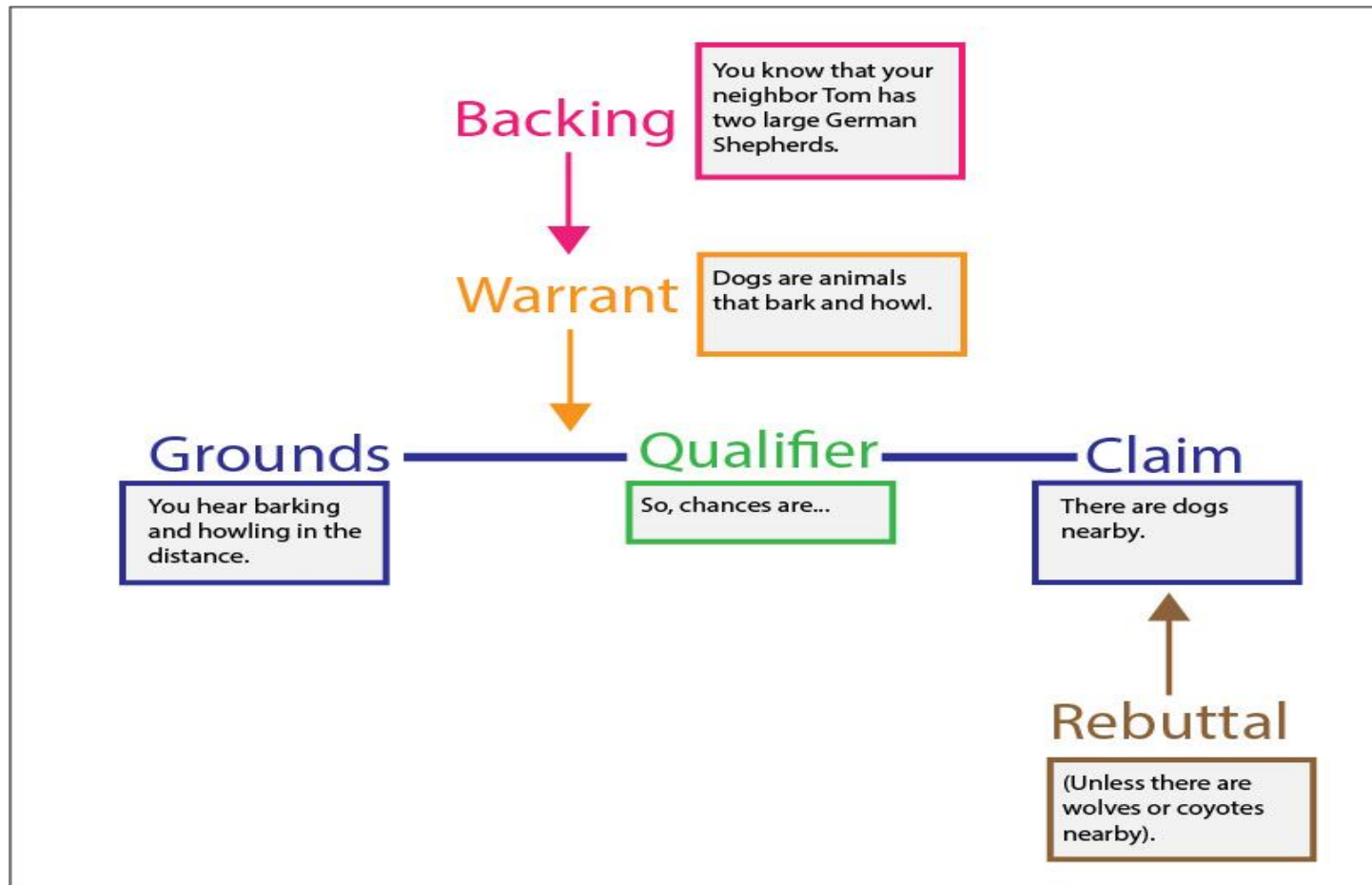
- ▶ Academic writing is persuasive in nature, and as such it requires that you establish a chain of evidence to prove your assertion or claim.
- ▶ Evidence can be many things, but this evidence needs to be valued by your discipline and come from a reputable source. This can include statistics, primary data, information that's been paraphrased or quoted from scholarly journal articles, etc.
- ▶ Citations are necessary.
- ▶ If your claims are unsubstantiated (not backed by evidence), readers are not likely to believe you.



Academic Writing is Persuasive

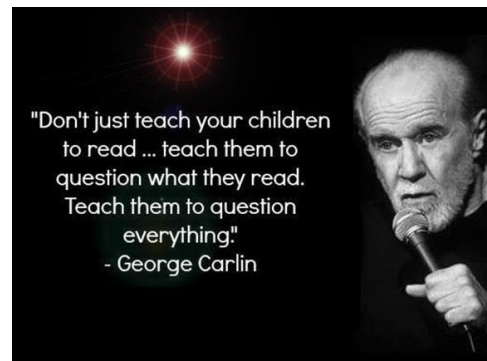
- ▶ To be persuasive and prove your credibility/ethos as a scholar, you need to create a thorough argument.
- ▶ To do so, you can follow the Toulmin method (this is not the only way to be persuasive, but it's a good option and it's a formula, so that's helpful).
- ▶ The Toulmin method is a style of argumentation that breaks arguments down into six component parts: **(1) claim, (2) grounds, (3) warrant, (5) qualifier, (6) rebuttal**, and (4) **backing**.
- ▶ A **claim** is the assertion that authors would like to prove to their audience. It is, in other words, the main argument.
- ▶ The **grounds** of an argument are the evidence and facts that help support the claim.
- ▶ The **warrant**, which is either implied or stated explicitly, is the assumption that links the grounds to the claim.
- ▶ **Backing** refers to any additional support of the warrant. In many cases, the warrant is implied, and therefore the backing provides support for the warrant by giving a specific example that justifies the warrant.
- ▶ The **qualifier** shows that a claim may not be true in all circumstances. Words like “presumably,” “some,” and “many” help your audience understand that you know there are instances where your claim may not be correct.
- ▶ The **rebuttal** is an acknowledgement of another valid view of the situation.

Academic Writing is Persuasive



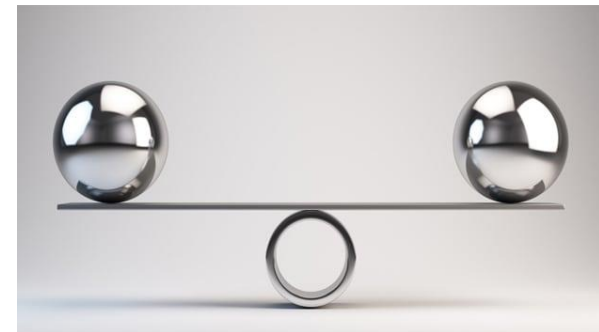
Academic Writing is Critical

- ▶ Academic writing is critical in the sense that your habit of mind as a scholar needs to be toward a critical disposition, or one that doesn't accept and believe information at face value. Critical thinking on your part is crucial!
- ▶ As you know, you need to do a lot of reading in graduate school. For you to fully comprehend what you are reading, you need to be an active, engaged reader. Take notes in the margins, ask questions of the text, look for incomplete analysis or blind spots in the readings, think of next steps or additional research that is needed to support the claims. Reading actively will help you have more to discuss when you write. It'll also help you to anticipate the sorts of questions readers might have of your text so that you can make sure you address them as you write.



Academic Writing is Balanced

- ▶ What “balanced” means, is giving consideration to all sides of the issue and avoiding bias (this is achievable through using the Toulmin method).
- ▶ In order for your writing to seem balanced, effective academic writing contains hedges and boosters.
- ▶ Hedges express caution.
- ▶ Boosters are the opposite of hedges because they includes language that emphasizes or strengthens points. They are used when writers commit to their statements or claims, but are utilized much less than hedges in academic writing.



Caution vs. Assertion

Hedges

- ▶ the evidence suggests
- ▶ this could be caused by
- ▶ perhaps
- ▶ possibly
- ▶ indicate
- ▶ tend to
- ▶ may
- ▶ might
- ▶ can
- ▶ could

Boosters

- ▶ certainly
- ▶ indeed
- ▶ always
- ▶ undoubtedly
- ▶ in fact
- ▶ clearly
- ▶ actually
- ▶ obviously
- ▶ conclusively
- ▶ evidently

Academic Writing is Precise

- ▶ The language used in academic writing needs to be clear and precise so that readers understand what is being communicated to them.
- ▶ Precise language includes language that is used in the discipline, or disciplinary language.
- ▶ At times, disciplinary language may need to be defined for understandings sake.



Academic Writing is Objective

- ▶ The emphasis/content is placed on the arguments and information and not on the writer (personal narratives feature less in academic writing).
- ▶ Because academic writing is less personal, academic writing uses noun and noun phrases more than verbs and adverbs.
 - ▶ Nouns: words (part of speech) used to identify people, places, and things. They are proper nouns if they name a particular one of these.
 - ▶ Noun phrase: a group of words that function like a noun (they act like subjects or objects in a sentence, but *are not a complete sentence*). They act as replacements for personal pronouns and focus on complex nouns to describe concepts, ideas, and theories.
- ▶ Examples of noun phrases: **“Most scientists agree that drastic action must be taken immediately.”** The noun phrase “most scientists” is a noun plus a determiner, meaning that the word “most” determines something essential about the noun. In this case, it is a specific kind of determiner known as a quantifier, because it is revealing how many scientists agree.
- ▶ **Every man of courage is a man of his word.** (French dramatist Pierre Corneille) (“Every man of courage” is the subject of the verb “is.” The noun phrase “a man of his word” is a subject complement following the linking verb “is.”)
- ▶ I never learned from **a man who agreed with me.** (Science-fiction writer Robert Heinlein) (The noun phrase “a man who agreed with me” is the object of the preposition “from.” Here’s the “pronoun test”: I never learned from **him.**)

Types of Academic Writing

Essay

Research
Paper

Research
Proposal

Master's
Thesis

Dissertation

Lab Report

Literature
Review

Annotated
Bibliography

Expressive Writing vs. Academic Writing

Personal Essay

- ▶ The subject veers almost uncontrollably toward metaphor, but I mean to take it literally: *I have unusually poor vision*, minus 1300 diopters and still losing ground, ordinary progressive myopia that never stopped progressing. *In me*, the process by which light is supposed to focus images at the back of the eye has *gone berserk*, and the point of focus shifts ever closer to the front, like the projection of a movie falling short of its screen.
- ▶ Here are some of the things I can find when I narrow my eyes and look: tiny new weeds in the front garden, fleas scurrying across my dog's belly, gray hairs. My mother, watching me struggle before the bathroom mirror for ten minutes while I spray and brush and bobby-pin to hide the worst of the gray, comments, *"I don't know why you bother. You don't have much. No one even sees it."*
- ▶ *"I see it every time I look in the mirror."*
- ▶ *"Well, you see what you're looking for."*
- ▶ "Bad Eyes" Written by Erin McGraw

Journal Article

- ▶ **Introduction**
- ▶ The process of writing a master's thesis *can be both rewarding and challenging* for university students. The thesis is generally viewed as a pinnacle of university studies, as it *usually* is required at the end of studies. *Students commonly experience* the thesis as an unforgettable achievement in their career and an important milestone in learning to conduct research (Ylijoki, 2003) and becoming specialists. *However, the thesis can also be* a source of challenges for students (de Kleijn et al., 2014; Wagener, 2018; Ylijoki, 2003). Through the thesis work, students have to demonstrate their capacity to conduct and report their research independently while at the same time they are still learning how to conduct research and report on it (de Kleijn et al., 2012; Ylijoki, 2003).
- ▶ Writing a master's thesis: Associations between the grade, self-efficacy for thesis writing, approaches to writing, and experiences of the thesis as a teaching and learning environment by Laura Mendoza, Sari Lindblom-Ylänne, Tuula Lehtonen & Heidi Hyytinen

More Resources on Academic Writing

- ▶ <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/writing-resources/>
- ▶ <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/graduate-writing-center/>
- ▶ https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/historical_perspectives_on_argumentation/toulmin_argument.html
- ▶ Noun phrases: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoMlfeQdcYk>
- ▶ https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/

Questions?

