

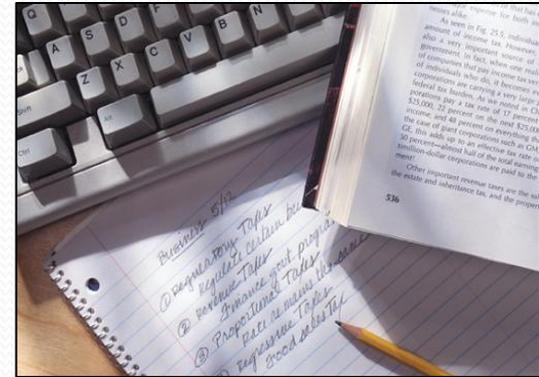
# Unraveling the Mystery of Academic Writing



Kelli Odhuu, Regional English Language Officer  
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# Myths about Writing

- Writers are born, not made.
- “Good” writers write fast.
- “Good” writers rarely struggle.
- “Good” writers get it right the first time.
- The longer the words, the better they are.



# Myths about Writing

- After drafting, “good” writers look for their grammar mistakes right away.
- There is only one way to write.
- The introduction should be written first.
- A well-stated point does not require proof.
- The longer the writing, the better it is.

# Why are we here?

- Issue: Many EFL teachers want to improve their academic writing skills
  - To strengthen their classroom instruction
  - To refine their own writing
- Audience: EFL teachers around the world
  - Those who teach academic writing
  - Those who want to write for professional purposes
- Purpose: Increase genre awareness and confidence as writers

# What will we do?

- Define characteristics of Academic Writing
- Examine the structure of academic texts
- Plan to write
  - Generate ideas
  - Establish the purpose
  - Identify the audience
- Learn how to structure an introduction

# Process Writing

- Plan
- Draft
- Edit (Peer editing)
- Revise
- Proofread
- Submit
- Feedback



# Academic Writing Definitions

- A writing **genre** which people in academia use to communicate their ideas according to a shared set of standards and conventions
- “...writing done by scholars for other scholars.” ([www.norton.com](http://www.norton.com))
- “...professional writing that trained ‘academics’—teachers and researchers—do for publications...and conferences attended by other academics.” ([www.classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk](http://www.classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk))

# Do these definitions really help?

- What does “academic writing” mean to you?
- What words and phrases would you use to describe “academic writing”?
  - Let’s brainstorm about characteristics in the chat box!



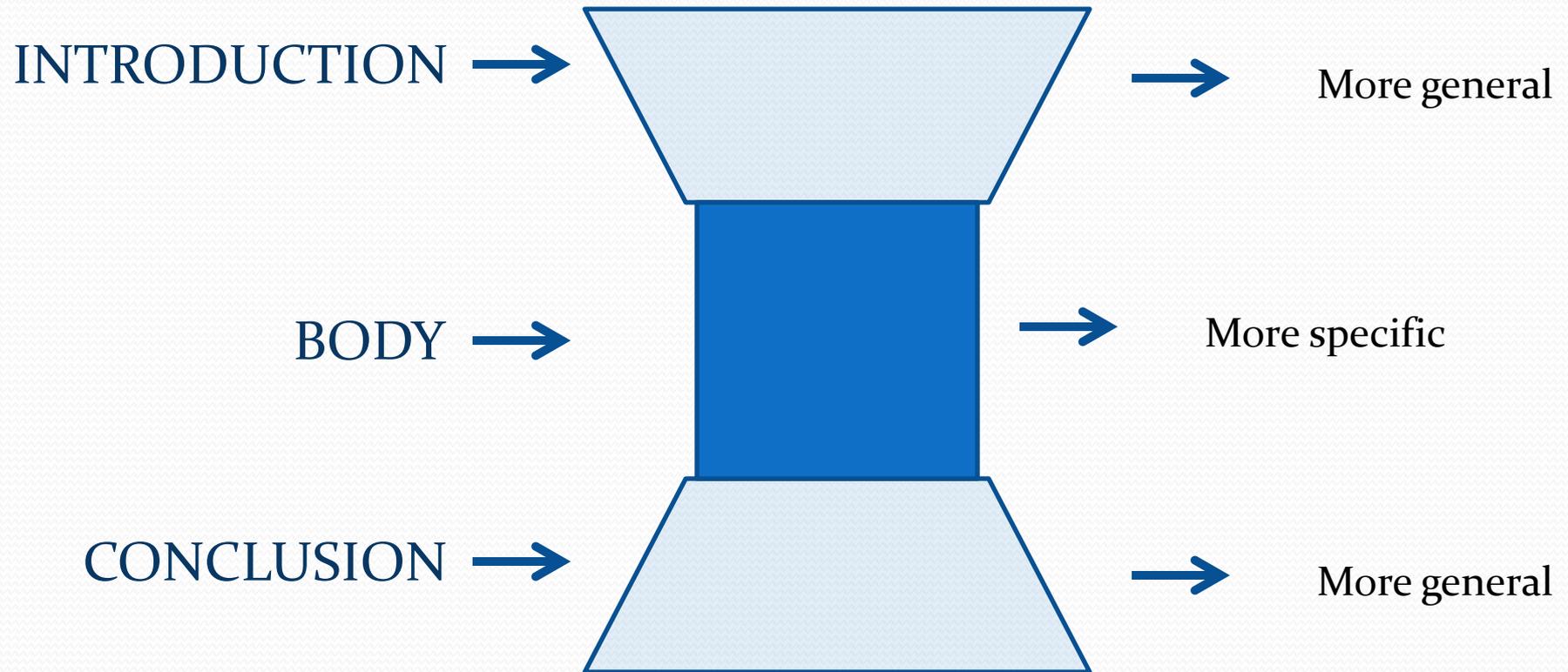
# A few words about “Academic Voice”

- “Vocabulary shift” – why?
- General tips
  - Use precise, succinct language
  - Avoid contractions
  - Avoid slang and casual language
  - Make your subjects and verbs clear
  - Use transitions to connect your ideas
  - Use other academic texts as models

# Academic Writing Texts

- Experimental Research Paper
- Analytical Research Paper
- Literature Review
- Book Review
- Descriptive Essay
- Compare and Contrast Essay
- Report
- Can you think of any others? Share in the chat box.

# Academic Texts: General Structure



# Research Papers

## **Experimental**

### Primary Research

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

## **Analytical**

### Secondary Research

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Discussion
- Conclusion

# Research Paper Structures

## Experimental

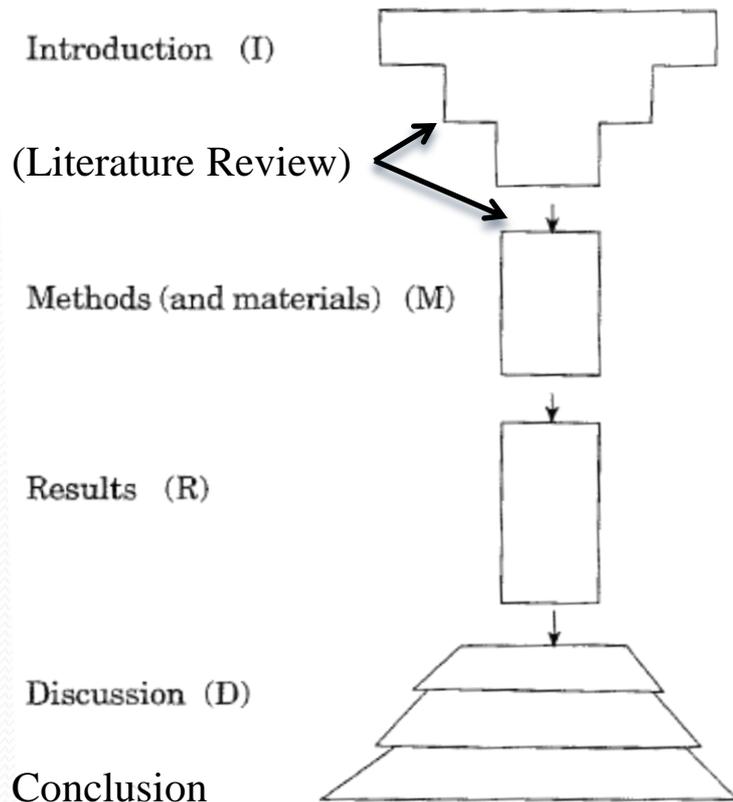


Fig. 10. Overall shape of a research paper

## Analytical

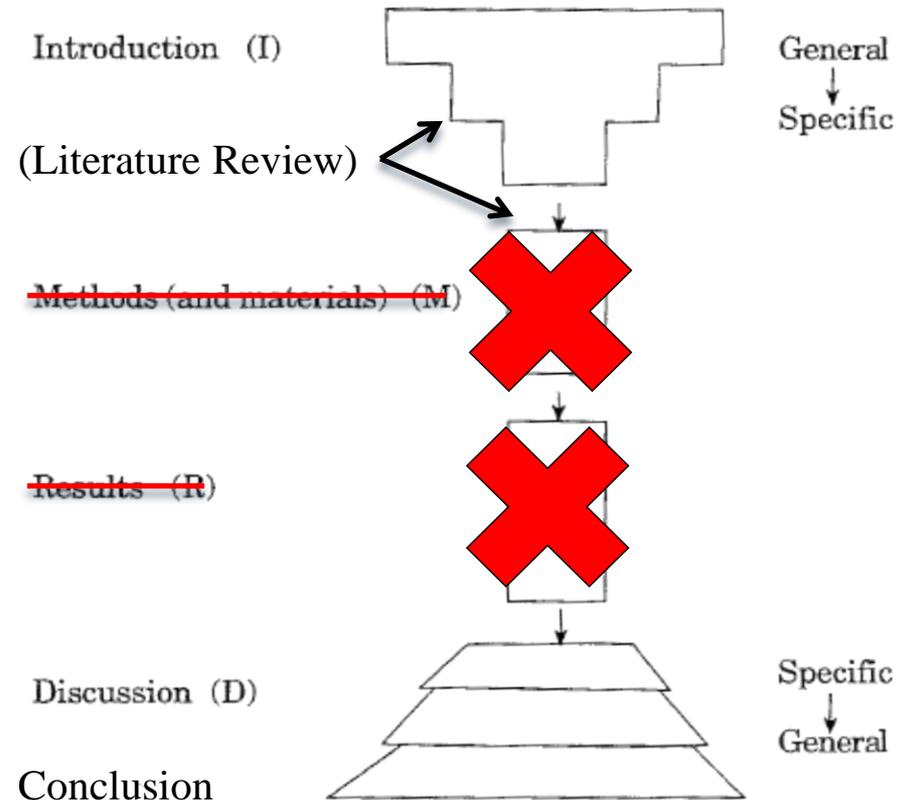


Fig. 10. Overall shape of a research paper

## “Promoting Genre Awareness in the EFL Classroom”

- Introduction
- Overview of the Genre Approach
- What is a genre?
- Discourse communities and acquiring genres
- Teaching genres
- Challenges for EFL teachers
- Genre awareness
- Genre and context awareness activities
- Genre and discourse awareness activities
- Genre and language awareness activities
- Conclusion
- References

(Millar, 2011)

### Analytical

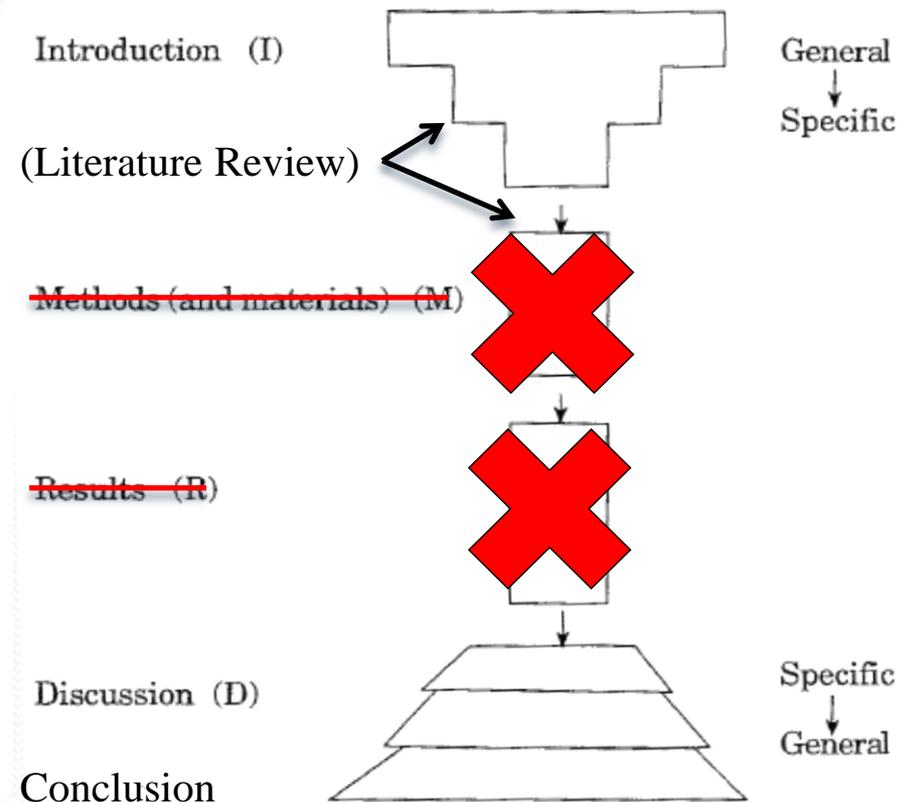


Fig. 10. Overall shape of a research paper

# “Rater Sensitivity to Qualities of Lexis in Writing”

- Introduction
- Review of Literature
  - Separating Lexis from Grammar
  - Lexical Accuracy
  - Lexical Frequency
  - Evaluating Lexical Qualities
- Method
- Results and Discussion
- Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research
- References

## Experimental

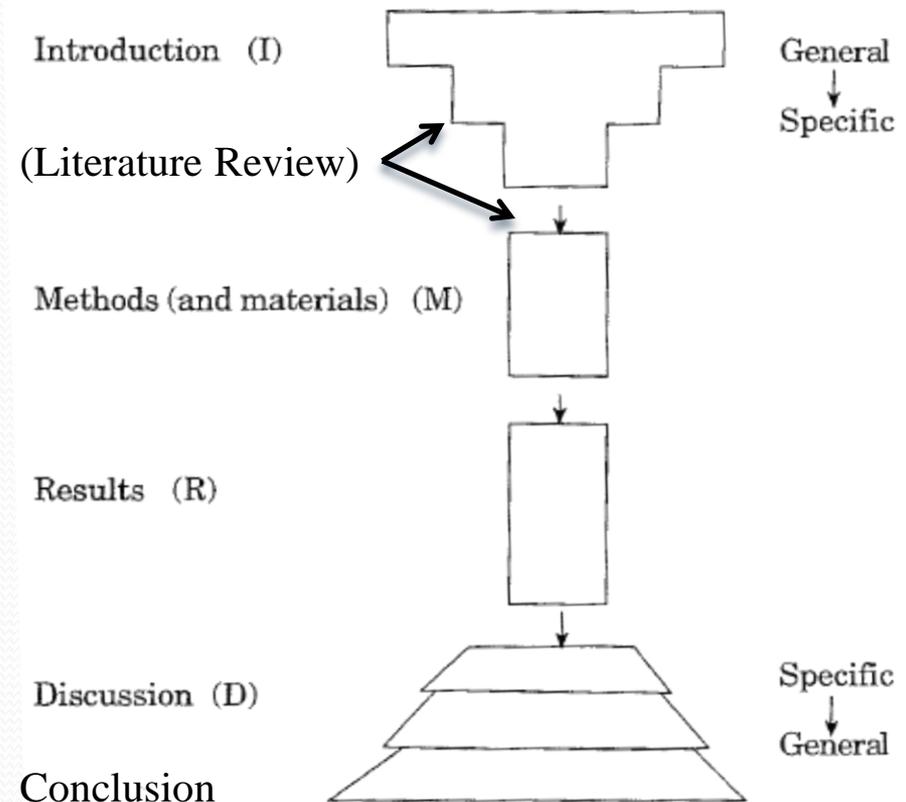


Fig. 10. Overall shape of a research paper

# Remember:

- Academic writing does not mean:
  - Sounding like a boring robot
  - Including every fancy word you have ever seen
- Do:
  - Write clearly and directly
  - Read to write – become familiar with style and tone in our field’s publications
- Many academic texts follow a “broad – narrow – broad” pattern
  - Look for this pattern as you read academic texts
- Now that we know more, let’s get ready to write!

# Process Writing

- **Plan**
- Draft
- Edit (Peer editing)
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- Feedback



# Planning to write

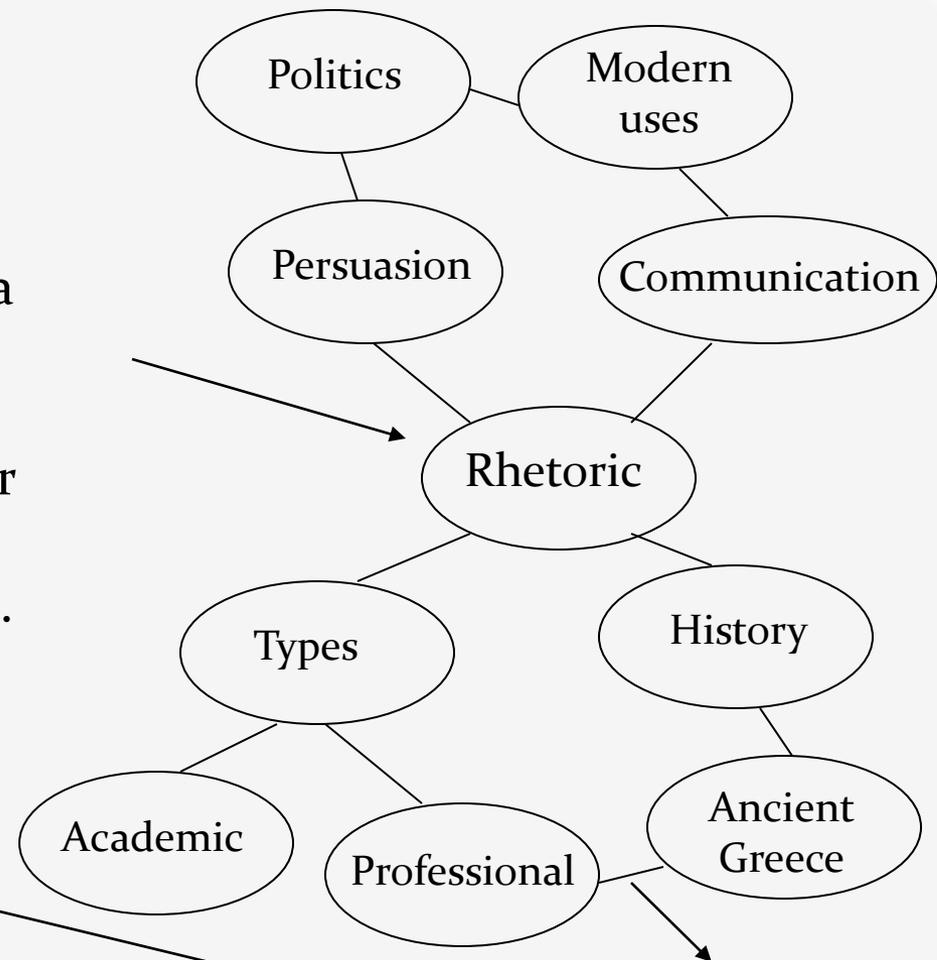
- What factors should we consider before we write?
  - Ideas
  - Audience
  - Purpose
  - Organization & Flow
  - Style
  - Presentation & Format

# Generating Ideas

- Freewriting
- Looping
- Clustering
- Listing
- Brainstorming
- Examining your topic from different angles
- Surveying colleagues
- Identifying your purpose and audience

# Generating Ideas: Clustering

- Rather than writing a free-flowing paragraph, start with a central word
- As related concepts pop in your head, indicate them as branches, arrows, bubbles, etc.
- You may have an “ah ha!” moment



[owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)

→ *What is the connection here?*

# Generating Ideas

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# Determining Our Purpose

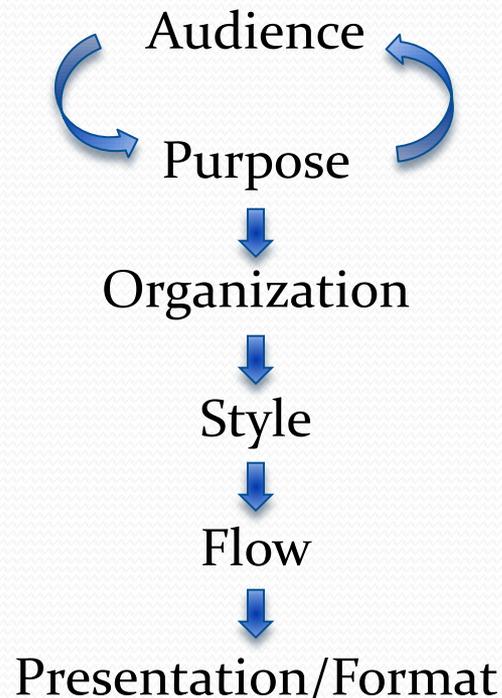
- What are some reasons why we write?
  - To share experiences and ideas
  - To inform
  - To persuade
- Share other **purposes** for writing in the chat box.

# Determining Our Purpose

- Why do we determine the purpose before we write?
  - The purpose affects all other steps
  - Ensures we meet the audience's expectations

# Identifying the Audience

- How does knowing about your audience shape your writing?



# Identifying the Audience

- Who is our primary audience?
  - Who is the general audience I want to reach?
  - Who is likely to be interested in my ideas?
  - Can I narrow my audience even more?
- What do we need to know about our audience?
  - Prior knowledge
  - Expectations

# Audience: Prior Knowledge

The discovery of buckminsterfullerene ( $C_{60}$ ) and its production in macroscopic quantities has stimulated a great deal of research. More recently, attention has turned towards other curved graphitic networks, such as the giant fullerenes ( $C_n$ ,  $n > 100$ ) and carbon nanotubes. A general mechanism has been proposed in which the graphitic sheets bend in an attempt to eliminate the highly energetic dangling bonds present at the edge of the growing structure. Here, I report the response of carbon soot particles and tubular graphitic structures to intense electron-beam irradiation in a high-resolution electron microscope; such conditions resemble a high-temperature regime, permitting a degree of structural fluidity.

(Ugarte, 1992)

- What does this passage assume about the audience?

# Audience: Prior Knowledge

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- Jargon and shared understanding of a field

# Academic Audiences Expect:

- A clear organizational structure
  - The author establishes the topic, explains the purpose, and describes how the paper will achieve it
- A clear, concise argument
  - Evidence-based information
- A conclusion that relates the information to a larger question or issue in the field

“Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them.”

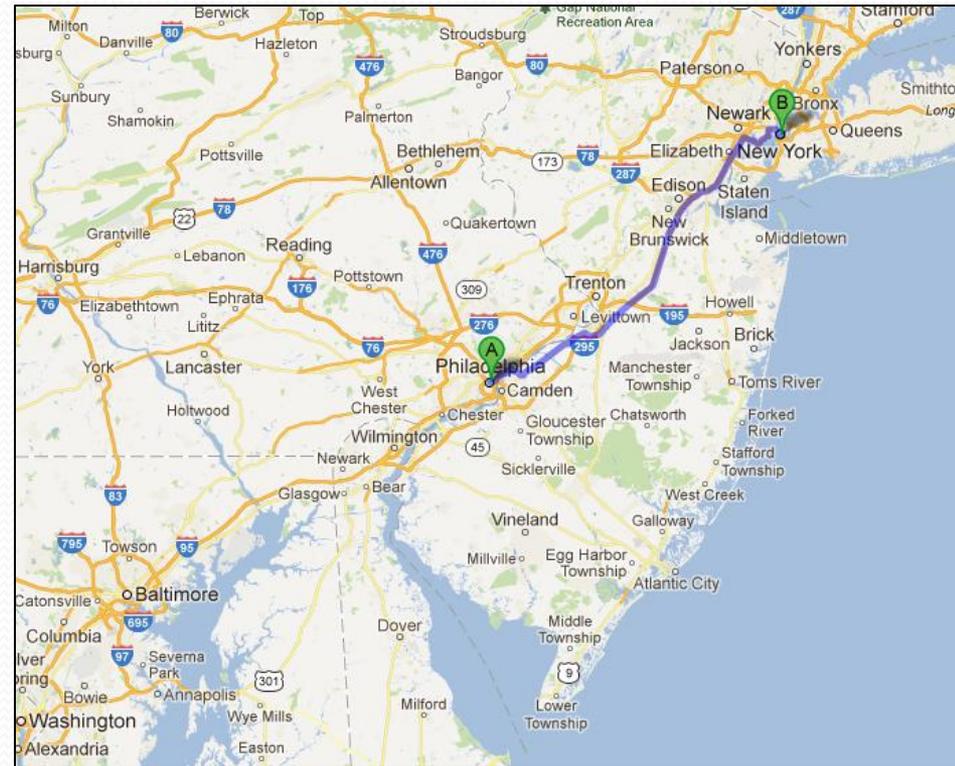
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# Introductions

- A “road map”
- You tell the reader:
  - Where you are going
  - How you will get there
- A contract with the reader
  - “You want to read this because....”
  - “If you read this text, I will....”



# Create a Research Space ('CARS' Model)

- **Move 1 - Establish research territory**
  - Define the topic
  - Review and/or acknowledge the work of others
- **Move 2 - Establish a niche**
  - Find the gaps
- **Move 3 - Occupy the niche**
  - Outline the purpose/nature of your research
  - Establish a structure: “procedural opening”

# Move 1: Establish research territory

- What is the broad topic?
- What is the problem/issue/interesting aspect?
- What has been done before?

# Establish Research Territory

“Much has been written about strategies for writing effective academic articles. For an excellent overview of issues to consider when publishing an academic article, we recommend Malcolm Benson’s article in the April 1994 *Forum*.”

(Miller and Parker, 2012)

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## Move 2: Establish a niche

- Why should we do this?
- How do we perform this move?

(adapted from Swales & Feak, 1994)

# Establish a Niche – Language Moves

- “Little” and “few” openings -> “No/none” openings
- Contrastive statements
  - “The research has focused on X while ignoring the issue of Y.”
- Raising a need
  - “Further investigations are needed to confirm...”
- Continuing a line of inquiry to extend it

# Establish A Niche

“Much less has been written about how a focus on the overall structure of the paper can help the reader and editor evaluate ideas and produce more readable articles.”

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# Move 3: Occupy the niche

- Thesis
- “Procedural opening”
  - Tell the reader exactly what you are going to do
  - Examples:
    - “In this paper I will discuss....”
    - “This paper will argue...”
    - “We will first address ‘issue X’ and then ...”

# Occupy the Niche

“We wish to demonstrate that the format of the article and flow of ideas is not arbitrary but serves to help the reader identify what kind of information can be found where. Following certain discourse guidelines will not only make an article easier to read but will, in fact, raise the possibility that it will be published. To make these ideas more concrete, we will focus on the problem-solution organization, which is the most common overall structure in a *Forum* article.”

Miller and Parker (2012)

# Occupy the Niche

THESIS

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# “Create a Research Space” versus “Situation-Problem-Solution”

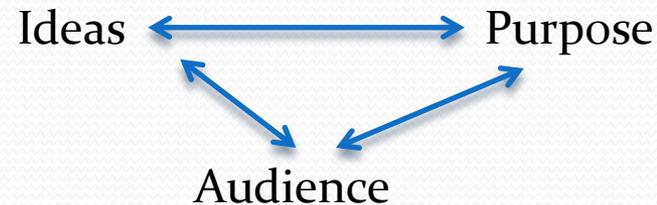
Move 1 - Establish research territory ↔ Situation

Move 2 - Establish a niche ↔ Problem

Move 3 - Occupy the niche ↔ Solution

# Remember:

- Planning to write makes the process more efficient



- Identify
  - Why you are writing – what do you want the reader to walk away with?
  - Who are you writing for – what do they already know, what do they expect?

# Remember:

- Make a contract with your reader in the introduction
  - Tell them where you are going and why
  - Take them there on the route you mapped out for them
- When you “finish” writing, go back to the introduction
  - Did you meet your obligations?
  - Did you take your reader “off the road”?

# Closing Tips

- Read to become a good academic writer!
  - Look for patterns (broad-narrow-broad)
  - Examine the language and style
    - Do the authors use slang and contractions?
    - How do the authors transition from one idea to another?
  - How did the author:
    - Establish research territory? (situation)
    - Create a niche? (problem)
    - Occupy the niche? (solution)

# Conclusion

- Great writers aren't born, they are made. It takes work!
- Academic writing is an opportunity to be a member of a community of professionals .
- We look forward to seeing you on the Ning!
- Please join us for other Series 7 webinars, including:

“Avoiding Plagiarism: Using Evidence in Academic Writing”

September 5, 2012

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