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From the Edanz "Academic English Writing" course

What journal editors want to see in your writing

by Dr. Trevor Lane

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Signposting in research articles

Below are some signposting words and phrases to help your readers follow your research article. Use signposts, as well as transition/linking words, to signal sections of the IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) format of research article. If you have any questions or require language or publishing support, please email global@edanzgroup.com.

Section /Function	Signpost phrases
1. Introduction: *Problem statement*	Unfortunately,… However,… Nevertheless,… Although… Despite… In spite of… A limitation of… As an alternative,… A problem/weakness of… Little is known about… There have been no/few studies on…
2. Introduction: *Hypothesis/Aim statement*	We hypothesized that… We asked/focused on/posed the following questions… Here/In this study, we aim/aimed to… The purpose of this study is/was to… This study aims/aimed to…
3. Methods	We studied, investigated, measured, evaluated, used, calculated, analyzed, examined, synthesized… To test X, we… We tested X by…
4. Results	Results of X showed that… As shown in Fig. 1,… According to the results of… Use of X revealed that…
5. Discussion	Our/These findings suggest that… When compared with… Whereas… Although… In terms of… Previous studies have shown… The findings reported here provide… Further work is needed to…
6. Conclusion	In conclusion,… In summary,… Taken together,… To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to… This study has shown for the first time that… This study has demonstrated that…

Writing Checklists

Use these checklists when finalizing your academic writing. If you have any questions or require language or publishing support, please email global@edanzgroup.com.

Checklist & items	Completed ⊠
1. Professional writing	
Language: correct & factually accurate, culturally appropriate	☐
Language: cohesive, coherent, compelling, clear, concise, competent	☐
Style of language: semiformal, objective, direct, fluent/natural, no exaggeration	☐
Neutral, unbiased language: chairman → chair; a doctor and his patient → doctors and patients; diabetics → people/patients with diabetes	☐
Standard academic jargon: significance (statistical) versus importance, probability (statistical) versus chance, sensitivity/specificity (statistical) versus accuracy	☐
Be engaging: topic linking & theme development according to text types, paragraphing, interest (via sentence variety, mix of active/passive)	☐
Quote/paraphrase (showing critical analysis), cite & reference properly	☐
One idea per sentence; one main idea per paragraph	☐
Grammar and spell check; define abbreviations	☐
2. Match your target journal	
Topic: match the journal aims & scope	☐
Focus: research or practice/policy, theory or application, laboratory or clinical	☐
Detail: more if general journal; more evidence if message/topic is controversial	☐
Technical jargon: less for general journal; more for specialist journal	☐
Requirements: authorship/conflicts of interest forms, cover letter, ethics/funding statements in manuscript, data files, etc	☐
Format: ○ Title page; title/abstract in correct format ○ Correct article structure & headings (eg, IMRaD) ○ Referencing style, need to include digital object identifiers (DOIs)? ○ UK/US spelling; numbers, symbols, units; "eg", "ie", "et al" allowed? ○ Page/line/font formatting, page/line numbering ○ Word count, number & style of illustrations	☐
3. Check your research article	
Clear title & abstract	☐
Introduction: ○ Introduces main topics; context & need for study ○ Clear problem, research question, purpose	☐
Methods & Results: ○ Clear, relevant methods & analysis ○ Clear illustrations, all referred to in text in correct order ○ No direct repetition of illustrations in text	☐
Discussion: ○ No repetition of results; no new results; context for findings ○ Strengths & weaknesses; highlight novelty/value/usefulness ○ Conclusion supported by data; not overgeneralized	☐
Referenced well: relevant, recent, international, correct details/format	☐
Logic: no gaps, consistency of language/data between all sections/parts	☐
Get a technical review by a native English-speaking researcher	☐

Delete useless words and phrases

Below are some examples of redundant or meaningless filler words that can be deleted from your text to improve clarity and readability. If you have any questions or require language or publishing support, please email global@edanzgroup.com.

Before	After
Unneeded category words:	
Large in size	Large
Bright in contrast	Bright
Red in color	Red
Square in shape	Square
Period in/of time	Period
Early in time	Early
Cheap in price	Cheap
Interesting in character/nature	Interesting
Tall in height	Tall
Short in length	Short
5 kg in weight	5 kg
At a temperature of 37°C	At 37°C
Cold in temperature	Cold
Quick speed	Quick
Nervous state	Nervous
Seldom rate	Seldom
Few in number	Few
Five in number	Five
Subject of physics	Physics
Moderate in degree	Moderate
New condition	New
Neat in appearance	Neat
Dilute concentration	Dilute
Grow in size	Grow
Unmodifiable terms or redundant pairs:	
Very dead	Dead
Quite unique	Unique
Extremely full	Full
Completely fill	Fill
Filled to capacity	Filled
Very empty	Empty
Great many	Many
Completely finish	Finish
Advance warning	Warning
Past history	History
Past memories	Memories
Past experience	Experience
Future plans, Advance plans	Plans
Various differences	Differences
Unexpected accident	Accident
End result	Result

Twelve noon	Noon
Twelve midnight	Midnight
Final outcome	Outcome
Free of charge	Free
Free gift	Gift
True facts, Actual facts	Facts
False lies	Lies
Essential necessities	Necessities, or Essentials
Basic necessities	Necessities or Basics
Each and every	Each, or Every
First and foremost	First
True and accurate	True, or Accurate
Whole entire	Whole, or Entire
Anticipate in advance	Anticipate
Completely revolutionary	Revolutionary
Meet together	Meet
Blend together	Blend
Fuse together	Fuse
Join together	Join
Merge together	Merge
Mix together	Mix
Close proximity	Proximity
Completely/Totally destroy	Destroy
Evolve over time	Evolve
Exact same	Same
Final conclusion	Conclusion
Polar opposites	Opposites
Revert back	Revert

Unnecessary qualifiers:	
Really	*Delete those words!*
Very	
Truly	
Totally	
Quite	
Slightly	
Somewhat	
Basically	
Definitely	
Actually	
Kind of/sort of	
Extremely	
Practically	
Virtually	
Hopefully	
Often	
Mostly	
Just	
Perhaps	
Absolutely	
Essentially	
Literally	

Shorten long phrases:	
Due/Owing to the fact that	Because
Given the fact that	Because
In light of the fact that	Because
Considering the fact that	Because
On the grounds that	Because
In the event that / If it should occur that	If
On the occasion of	If
Under circumstances which	If, When
In the process of	When
For the purpose of	For, To
It is necessary/crucial that	Should, Need
In spite of/Regardless of/Despite the fact that	Although
Prior to	Before
Subsequent to	After
That is thus the reason why	Therefore
In order to	To
In the first place	First, Firstly
It is possible that X	X could/can
With regard to / As regards / With reference to	Regarding, About
All of the	All the
At the present time	Now, Currently
On a regular basis	Regularly
Time and time again	Repeatedly
Write down	Write
Two equal halves	Halves
Make a decision / an estimation	Decide, Estimate

Rewrite negativity:	
Not different	Similar
Not many	Few
Not include	Exclude
Not accept	Reject
Not the same	Different

Fillers and empty phrases:	
For all intents and purposes	*Delete those words!*
It goes without saying	
As is widely known	
It is well known that	
As a matter of fact	
When all is/was said and done	
At the end of the day	
In the end	
In this day and age	
For what it's worth	
In my humble opinion	
As far as I'm concerned	
For the most part	