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ACNIS Writing Workshop

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# Writing is a skill

- Many papers are badly written
- Good writing is a skill you can learn
- It's a skill that is worth learning:
  - Your ideas will have more impact
  - You will have better ideas

# The Narrative

- Here is a problem
- It's an interesting problem
- It's an unsolved problem
- **Here is my idea**
- My idea works (details, data)
- How my idea compares to others

I wish I  
knew how  
to solve  
that!

I see how  
that works.  
Ingenious!



# The Challenge of Writing



# Writing Style and Audience

- Avoid anecdotes or stories
- Reports facts
- Avoid using the first person
- Write for your target audience



# Word Choices

- **Knowledge:** Recitation of fact
  - Found, identified, labeled
- **Comprehension:** State a problem or interpret fact
  - Discuss, predict, compare
- **Application:** Apply old information to solve new problems
  - Solve, show, examine, classify
- **Analysis:** Used to explain patterns or meaning
  - Analyze, investigate, compare, contrast
- **Synthesis:** Making predictions or discussing possibilities
  - Predict, plan, devise, propose
- **Evaluation:** Drawing conclusions, making recommendations
  - Justify, verify, argue, recommend, determine

# Key Parts

- Abstract (200-300 words)
  - Problem/Purpose
  - Methods & Results
  - Conclusion
- Introduction (300-500 words)
  - Broad information on topic
  - Previous research
  - Narrower background
  - Need for study
  - Focus of paper
  - Hypothesis
  - Summary of problem



# Tips & Hints

Decide what are the key conclusions of the paper- the important message that you want to put across. Do you have all the data AND the figures to prove your point?

If possible, give an informal ORAL presentation of the work before you start to write the paper. This way you will clarify the story you want to tell and can anticipate objections or misunderstandings

Decide what are the key points that you need to make, and write them out. Focus on hypotheses/contention

# Tips & Hints on Process

Know your working style. For example, pencil and paper versus computer

*Set a deadline*

Faced with a blank piece of paper, it is best to just put something down and edit it afterwards rather than to expect to write a perfect sentence straight away

Next, write the INTRODUCTION; the TITLE is critical- it must be short and "big-picture" without over selling

Expect to write multiple drafts, so keep track of them carefully

# Tips & Hints on Style

Subheadings are useful to keep issues separate

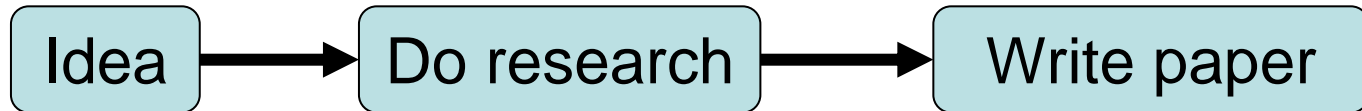
The first paragraph is crucial for catching the attention of the audience; if you don't catch the attention of the audience in the first few sentences.....

The Introduction should set the scene and context

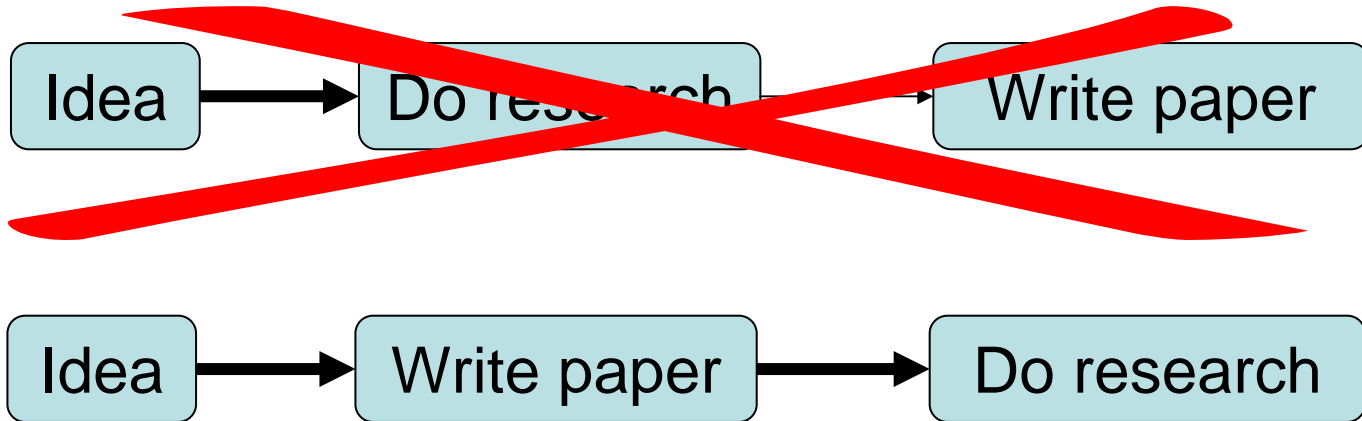
The last paragraph of the Introduction should be a short summary of what you set out to do

Keep sentences short--15-20 words is about right but shorter ones can be used for impact or emphasis

# Writing papers: model 1



# Writing papers: model 2



- Forces us to be clear, focused
- Crystallises what we don't understand
- Opens dialogue with others: reality check, critique, and collaboration

# Use simple, direct language

**NO**

The object under study was displaced horizontally

On an annual basis

Endeavour to ascertain

It could be considered that the speed of storage reclamation left something to be desired

**YES**

The ball moved sideways

Yearly

Find out

The garbage collector was really slow

# Conclusion

