

Introduction - Creating a Research Space (CARS, by John Swales)

<p>1. Establish a Territory</p> <p>1a. <b>Claim importance</b></p> <p>“Graduate writing is increasingly important because more and more professionals use it.”</p> <p>1b. <b>Make topic generalizations <u>and/or</u></b></p> <p>“Most students use writing in their classes. Most writers are at least someone familiar with writing as a process. However, many writers still struggle, even at higher levels.”</p> <p>1c. <b>Review items of Previous Research</b></p> <p>“J. Swales contributed outlines, which are helpful. Clarke’s research into higher writing is somewhat similar...”</p>	<p>2. Establish a Niche</p> <p>2a. <b>Counter-claim <u>or</u></b></p> <p>“Some say writing should focus more on grammar, but organization is just as needed.”</p> <p>2b. <b>Indicate a gap <u>or</u></b></p> <p>“Not enough of the current research is about ESL graduate students.”</p> <p>2c. <b>Question-raising <u>or</u></b></p> <p>“Can writing handouts and guides help students with writing?”</p> <p>2d. <b>Continue a tradition</b></p> <p>“Teachers should continue to build on Swales’s work by combining it with grammar activities.”</p>	<p>3. Occupy a Niche</p> <p>1a. <b>Outline Purposes <u>or</u></b></p> <p>“The goal of our study is to get students to write more.”</p> <p>1b. <b>Announce Present Research</b></p> <p>“Our recent study looked at writers in South Texas...”</p> <p>2. <b>Announce Principle Findings</b></p> <p>“The current data suggests students need more time on format.”</p> <p>3. <b>Indicate Article Structure</b></p> <p>“In this study, we will discuss...”</p>
--	--	--

Outline!

**Before you start writing**, create a structure that tells you which piece goes where.

- 1) What are the main points I am trying to make in this piece of writing? What are the most important?
- 2) Consider audience, always. What background information will my readers need to understand each point? What will an audience of experience already understand?
- 3) In what order do I want to present my ideas? By theory? By Method? Chronologically? Most complex to least complex? Another order?

Reverse Outline!

**After you finish writing**, label the parts of your own essay! Did you miss something?

- 1) What topics are covered in this piece of writing?
- 2) In what order are the ideas presented? Is this order logical for both novice and experienced readers?
- 3) How much background information is provided for each point? How easy is it to understand how one idea leads to the next?
- 4) What other points might I include to further develop the writing project?

Adapted from Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Signposting – Tell the reader what will come next.

Some are subtle are developed, but obvious can get the point across, too.  
Use **signal words** and **transitional phrases**.

To establish cause and effect: *therefore, thus, as a result, consequently*

To show similarity: *similarly, in the same way*

To show difference: *however, on the contrary, but, despite that*

To elaborate: *moreover, furthermore, in addition, finally*

To explain or present examples: *for example, for instance, such as, in particular*

Adapted from Clark, I. (2006). *Writing the successful thesis and dissertation: Entering the conversation*. Prentice Hall.

## Literature Review

## Questions to Help You Plan

- What is my central question or issue that the literature can help define? – Consider a topic that is meaningful to you and important in the field. Find areas in the subject that are unanswered or that have not been well-explained yet.
- What is already known about the topic? – Do research to determine what experts have said. **Seminal and watershed works** (works that are older or are frequently cited) are a good starting place. After that, check what works have been published recently (last 5-10 years) on the subject.
- Is the scope of the literature being reviewed wide or narrow enough? – Once you have narrowed down your idea and your question(s), try to narrow your topic to a particular population, place, person, or thing, or time. More specific scopes might have less current research on the topic—but you may be able to **synthesize** multiple areas of research and researchers to create a new area of conversation in the topic.
- What connections can be made between the texts being reviewed? – You may be able to find texts that connect naturally—they rely on **intertextuality**. Sometimes researchers purposefully respond to each other’s works to answer a single question over time. Other times you may also find that one area of research can apply to another, but no discussion or application has been done—yet! This is where you can find and make connections.
- What sort of literature should be reviewed? Historical? Theoretical? Methodological? Quantitative? Qualitative? – Depending on your field of study, there may be many approaches to take when finding literature to include in the review. Data-focused fields like STEM may trend toward methodological and quantitative research, while humanities research may focus on theories and historical contextualized research.
- What criteria should be used to evaluate the literature being reviewed? – This may be a place to examine flaws and pitfalls you notice in a study. However, the strengths of a study’s design may also be considered. What makes the study interesting or necessary as part of your topic?
- DON’T merely summarize your sources. – Ideally, you want to do more with the literature than summarize the work. In looking at multiple sources, you put together a picture of what is already being discussed in order to understand (and help your reader understand) where you intend to go **next**.
- DON’T include it just because you read it. - No matter how you choose to explore literature, it should be relevant to the center question or issue.

## Questions to help Organize Your Literature Review

Is your review of other people’s research organized chronologically, by topic, by method, by theory?

Are there headings and subheadings? How do you transition between ideas?

Your paragraphs should be readable (if more than a page, split them up).

Do you use a mix of sources? Are your authors varied? Do you include both current and seminal texts?

Exercise 1: Find an article in your discipline and analyze a section in which relevant literature is reviewed. How does the review demonstrate the qualifications of the author(s)? How does it justify the choice of topic and serve as a means of entering the scholarly conversation?

Exercise 2: Find a thesis or dissertation on the topic you plan to address in your own work. How is it similar to and different from the review in the published article you found in Exercise 1? Try the TAMIU Thesis Database! <https://www.tamiu.edu/library/ThesesDissertations.shtml>

Exercise 3: Is there a conflict of perspectives in the topic you plan to address? Can you use this conflict to justify your choice of topic?

Still unsure where to start? Stuck in the process? Try an exercise!