



The Structure of Academic Papers¹

The general structure of an academic paper consists of 3 main parts: the introduction, the main part, the conclusion (c.f. the acronym IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion²).

The **Introduction** gives a systematic overview.

Functions:

- Introducing the topic
- Explaining the topic (give background information and introduce the area of research)
- State of the art (summary of existing literature to determine the relevance and value of your own research), identifying gaps, inconsistencies, gray areas.
- Stating the research question(s) and the hypothesis/several hypotheses
- Stating aims and objectives
- Present in a substantiating way the methodological approach

The **main part** approaches the problem systematically.

Functions:

- Description, definitions
- Analysis
- Discussion
- Argumentation
- Discussion, reflection

The main part can be structured in different ways, depending on the topic, the focus etc. Structure options:

- Historically – Chronologically
- Theoretically – Empirically
- Case example(s) – Generalizing theory
- Description of form – Depiction of functions
- Basics – Specific research questions
- Problem statement – Suggested solutions
- Pro – Con – Synthesis
- Hypothesis – Analysis – Discussion

The **conclusion** gathers everything that has been previously written and contextualizes theory, methodology, results, analysis, as well as the meaning of the results, in order to answer the research question(s).

Functions:

- Summary
- Assessment
- Demonstration of perspectives

¹ C.f. Karin Wetschanow (2014), adapted by Eva Kuntschner, revised by Klara Dreö

² Swales, J. (1993). Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings (3. Aufl.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.