



Aalto University
Language Centre

Language Tips for Thesis Writers

Maurice Forget, MA

Language Courses

Master's Courses

LCA-1020 Academic Communication for Master's Students (3 ECTS)

LCA-1022 Academic Writing (3 ECTS)

For more info, contact Maurice Forget (maurice.forget@aalto.fi)

Writing Clinic

8 sessions for FREE

- Ø Meet one-to-one for an hour with a Language Centre teacher to help you improve your writing. In person or via Skype.
- Book through **MyCourses**

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enlc/Writing+Clinic>

> Writing Clinic

i Course overview

▶ COURSE ADMINISTRATION

▶ SWITCH ROLE TO...

▶ MY PROFILE SETTINGS

RECENT ACTIVITY

Activity since Saturday, 20 February 2016, 5:44 PM

[Full report of recent activity...](#)

No recent activity

Writing Clinic

Academic writing is demanding for everyone!

Writing your thesis, dissertation or journal article in English adds an extra challenge for non-native writers. We want to facilitate your writing process and help you improve as a writer; to provide individual writing tutoring to help you learn how to plan, organise, write and revise academic papers. This is **not** a language-checking service.

Consultations are usually 30-60 minutes long and are arranged in Otaniemi, Arabianranta or via Skype Business if needed. Longer appointments can be made, but must be directly negotiated with the tutor.

This service is offered to the schools of **SCI, CHEM, ELEC, ENG & ARTS**. Clients from these schools may book up to **six hours'** worth of appointments (preferably not in one go) during the academic year.


This service is also offered to **specific researchers** at the school of **BIZ** who are submitting to one of the journals in the following lists: FT45, JUFO 3, ABS 4. Certain tutors have been appointed to this school: Maurice Forget, Pia Lappalainen, Ken Pennington, Diane Pilkinton-Pihko, and Jan-Mikael Rybicki. Unless specially requested and arranged, most appointments will most likely be on the Otaniemi campus. For appointments on the Töölö campus, please inquire directly from the tutor selected.

Writing Clinic services are offered **19th August - 11th December 2015; 7th January -17th June 2016**.

Some useful links:

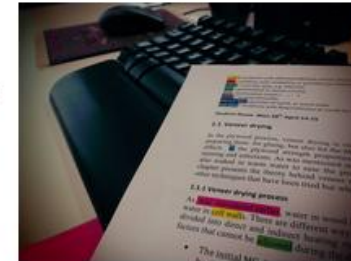
- [Writing Clinic home page](#)
- [English teachers' contact details](#)
- [Recommended links](#) (for self-help and consultation)
- [Turnitin](#) (for independent originality check, i.e. plagiarism check. Use the submission box A, not B)

To book an appointment, please follow the steps below. **DO NOT FORGET TO EMAIL YOUR TEXT TO YOUR TUTOR AT THE END OF THE BOOKING PROCESS OR TWO-THREE DAYS BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT.**

 1. Log in to MyCourses

 2. Enrol into the workspace

 3. Book an appointment and email your text directly to the tutor



PROGRESS E

No activities or resc
on" and cli

UPCOMING I

There are no upcomi

ACTIVITIES

 Assignments 

What is “good” Academic Writing?

Individual Task

Write down your ideas on the sticky notes.

— One idea per sticky note!



What is “good” Academic Writing?

Groups of 3 – 5

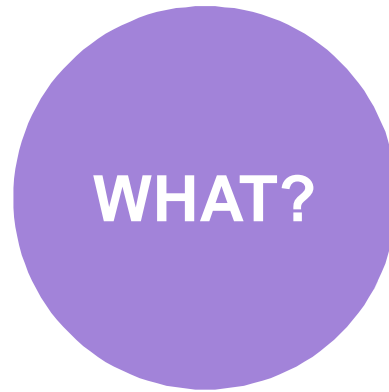
- Share your ideas with your group.
- Decide which ideas are related to each other. Organize the notes into categories.
- Name the categories.

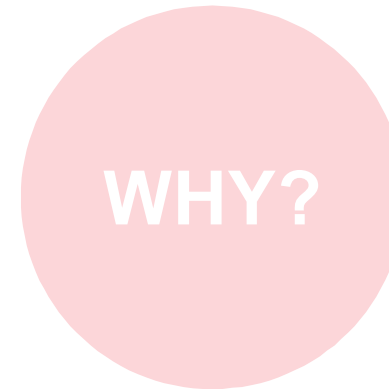
Make a poster summarizing your group’s ideas, be prepared to present your ideas to the others.

What is “good” Academic Writing?

1. **Objectivity**
2. **Complexity:** lexically and grammatically more complex
3. **Formality**
4. **Precision with facts & figures**
5. **Explicitness:** signposting / linking ideas
6. **Accuracy:** narrow specific terminology
7. **Hedging:** cautious language indicating a degree of certainty
8. **Responsibility:** support claims with evidence, use sources, critically assess sources

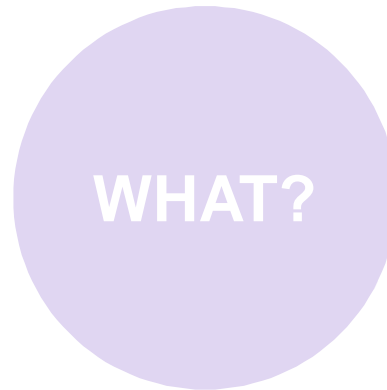
(Gillet, 2015)





Who is the text for?

e.g. Professor, Journal editor, Public, Employer...





Audience



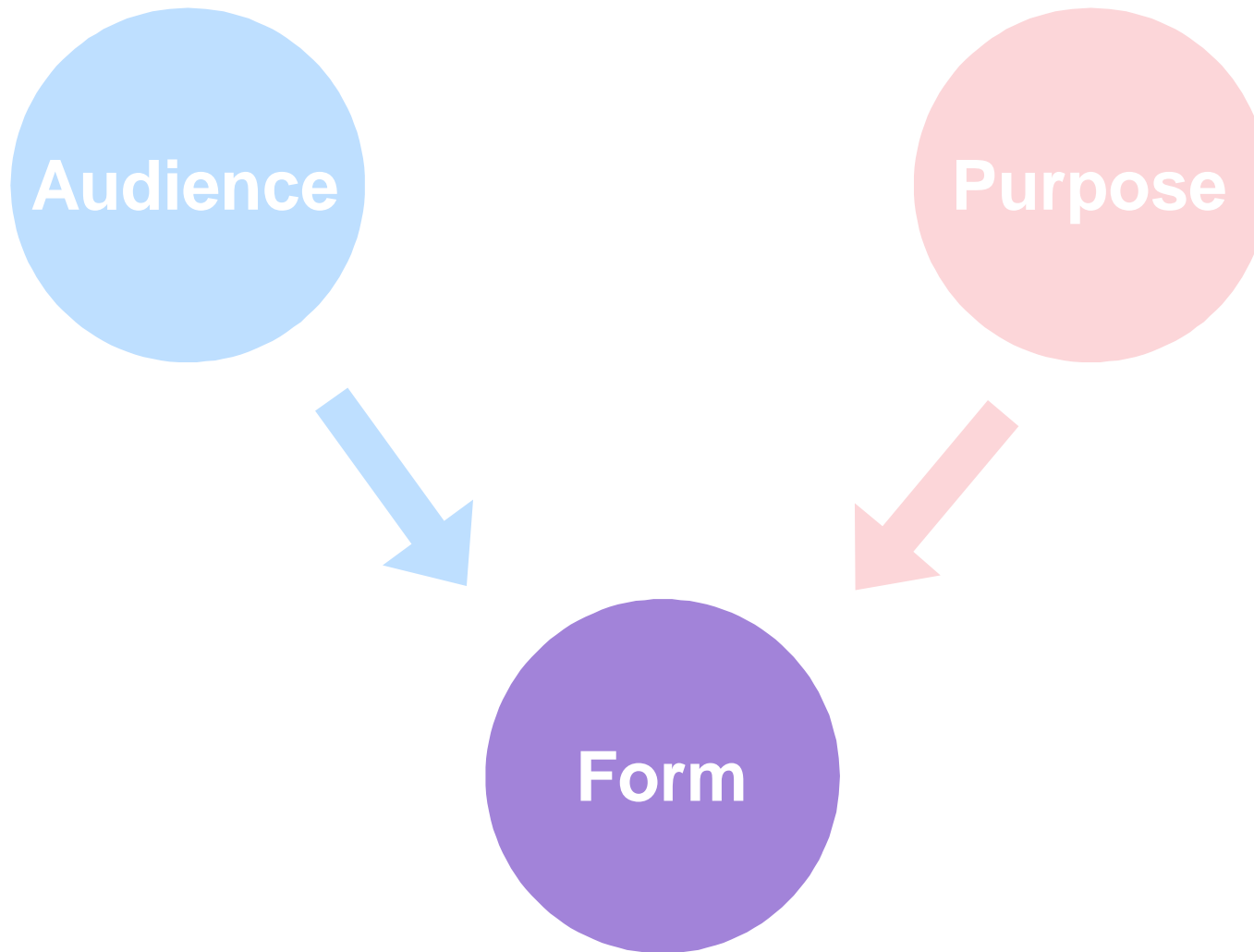
Purpose

Why write the text?

e.g. to inform, to persuade, to argue, to describe, etc.



WHAT?



GENRE & STYLE

**e.g. formal versus informal style, vocabulary choice,
order of information, level of detail, etc.**



**Word &
Sentence**



Paragraph



Thesis

A close-up photograph of a green leaf, showing the intricate network of veins and the cellular structure of the leaf surface. The cells are arranged in a regular, grid-like pattern, with prominent veins running through them. The overall color is a vibrant green, with some darker and lighter shades due to the lighting and the natural texture of the leaf.

On the Micro Level

WORDS & SENTENCES



England 1066 AD

Formality – Verbs

Anglo-Saxon verbs

- **Be**
- Do
- Get
- Give
- Be going to
- Happen
- Have
- Have to
- Mean
- Put
- Use

Linate verbs

- Be situated, be listed, serve as
- Perform, implement, execute
- Become, acquire, procure
- Provide, supply, contribute
- Will
- Occur
- Possess, include, contain
- Should, must
- Denote, indicate
- Place, attach, insert
- Employ, utilize, apply, exploit

Formality – Nouns

Informal

- a thing
- know-how
- trouble
- an idea
- the meaning (of)

Formal

- a device, object, instrument
- expertise
- difficulty, challenge
- a concept, plan, notion
- the purpose, aim, objective, target

Formality – Adjectives

Informal

- good
- bad
- small, tiny
- big
- different

Formal

- suitable, effective, beneficial
- poor, ineffective, unsuitable
- minute, insignificant
- major, high, large, great
- various, a variety of, separate

Thesaurus

design



see definition of [design](#)



show

all ▾

noun **sketch, draft**

noun **artful conception**

noun **intention**

verb **plan, outline**

verb **create, conceive**

[Colourful crutches](#)

www.coolcrutches.com/

lightweight, comfortable, quiet, coloured crutches

Ad

Relevance



A-Z

Complexity



+

Length



+

Synonyms for design



Common



Informal



noun **sketch, draft**

architecture

arrangement

composition

construction

drawing

form

idea

layout

map

method

model

pattern

picture

plan

scheme

study

blueprint

chart

comp

conception

constitution

delineation

depiction

diagram

doodle

dummy

formation

makeup

outline

paste-up

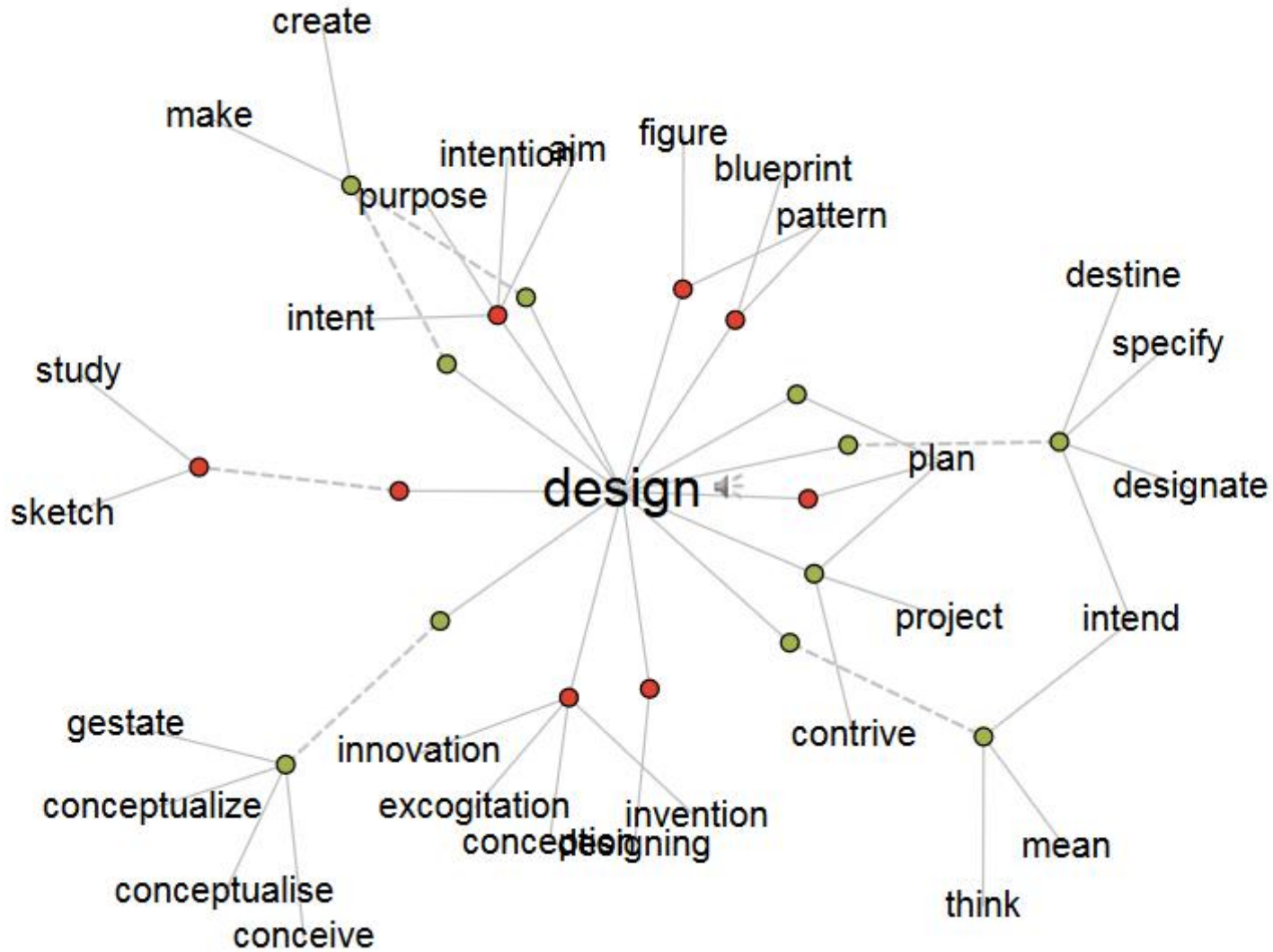
perspective

tracery

tracing

treatment

Visual Thesaurus



[Introducing Work](#)

[Referring to Sources](#)

[Describing Methods](#)

[Reporting Results](#)

[Discussing Findings](#)

HOME »

Compare and Contrast

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

[Being Critical](#)

[Being Cautious](#)

[Classifying and Listing](#)

[Compare and Contrast](#)

[Defining Terms](#)

[Describing Trends](#)

[Describing Quantities](#)

[Explaining Causality](#)

[Giving Examples](#)

[Signalling Transition](#)

[Writing about the Past](#)

By understanding similarities and differences between two things, we can increase our understanding and learn more about both. This usually involves a process of analysis where we compare the specific parts as well as the whole. Comparison may also be a form of evaluation. For example, by comparing specific aspects of A and B, we can determine which is more useful or valuable. Many paragraphs whose function is to compare or contrast begin with an introductory sentence expressed in general terms.

Introductory Sentences: Differences

X is different from Y in a number of respects.

X differs from Y in a number of important ways.

There are a number of important differences between X and Y.

Women and men differ not only in physical attributes but also in the way in which

Smith (2003)	found observed	distinct significant notable considerable major only slight	differences between ...
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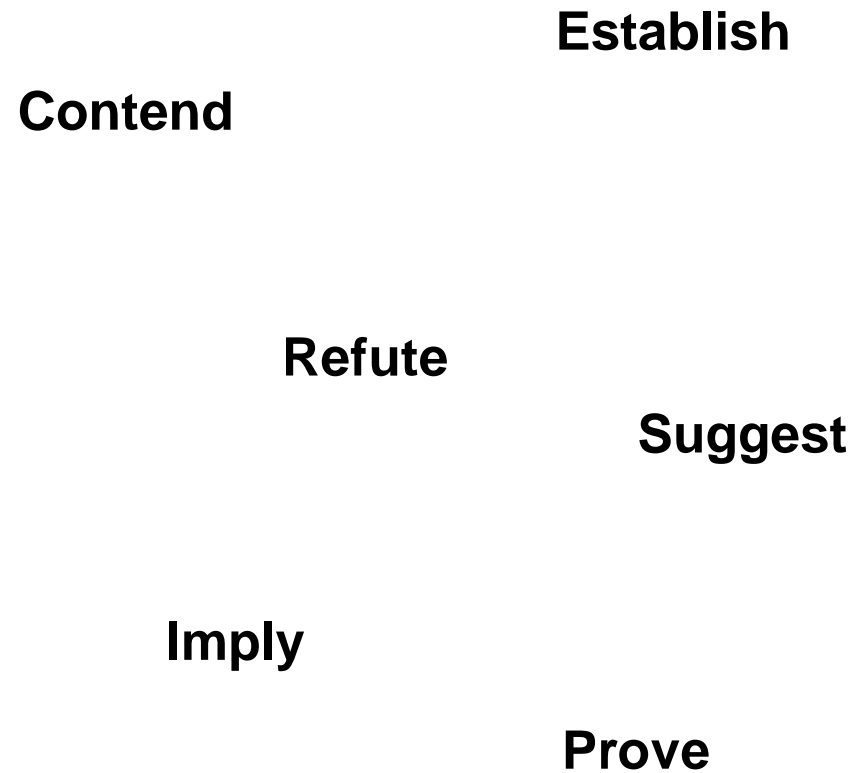
Hedging

1. Level of certainty
2. Likelihood
3. Distance
4. Softening generalizations

Level of Certainty

Small groups

Arrange from most to least certain



Level of Certainty



Toikka et al. (2002)

(Lappalainen, 2016)

- Prove
- Validate
- Confirm
- Corroborate
- Affirm
- Refute
- Attest
- Establish
- Demonstrate
- Show
- Indicate
- Claim
- Contend
- Argue
- Concede
- Admit
- Suggest
- Propose
- Imply
- Hint

MOST



LEAST

Likelihood – Modal verbs

Word-of-mouth advertising **influences** a consumer's incentive to purchase a product.

can influence

could influence

may influence

might influence

Likelihood – Phrases

Stronger



It is clear that...

It is rather clear that...

It is very probable/highly likely that...

It is probable/likely that...

It is possible that...

It is unlikely that...

Weaker

word-of-mouth advertising influences a consumer's incentive to purchase a product.

Distance

Based on the limited data available...

According to the preliminary study...

Based on previous surveys...

According to some earlier studies...

In the view of many scholars...

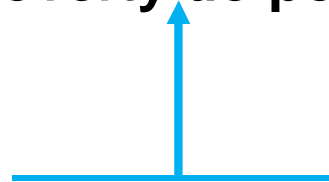
the African continent has considerable potential for developing solar energy for domestic needs and for export.

Softening generalizations

Children living in poverty do poorly in school. **(Strong)**

Softening generalizations

Children living in poverty do poorly in school. (Strong)



appear to

tend to

seem to

(Softening verbs)

Softening generalizations

Children living in poverty do poorly in school. **(Strong)**

Many

A majority of

Some

In most parts of the world,

(Limit the subject)

Active versus Passive Voice

Active – Subject performs the action of the verb

They designed this product to improve efficiency.

Passive – Subject receives the action of the verb

The product was designed (by them) to improve efficiency.

Which should you use? Why?

Avoid personal pronouns

I propose a new solution for recycling plastic...

Use the inanimate agent

This thesis proposes a new solution for recycling plastic...

This thesis analyzes...

This paper argues...

This report discovered...

This article researched...

Verb tense – Present simple

The data **suggests**...

There **is** evidence that...

Uses:

To introduce your work

To make general statements, conclusions, or interpretations about research

To introduce evidence or support

Verb tense – Past Simple

Swales (2002) **found**...

A paired samples t-test **was run**...

Uses:

To introduce others' research work

To describe methods and data in your work

Verb tense – Present Perfect

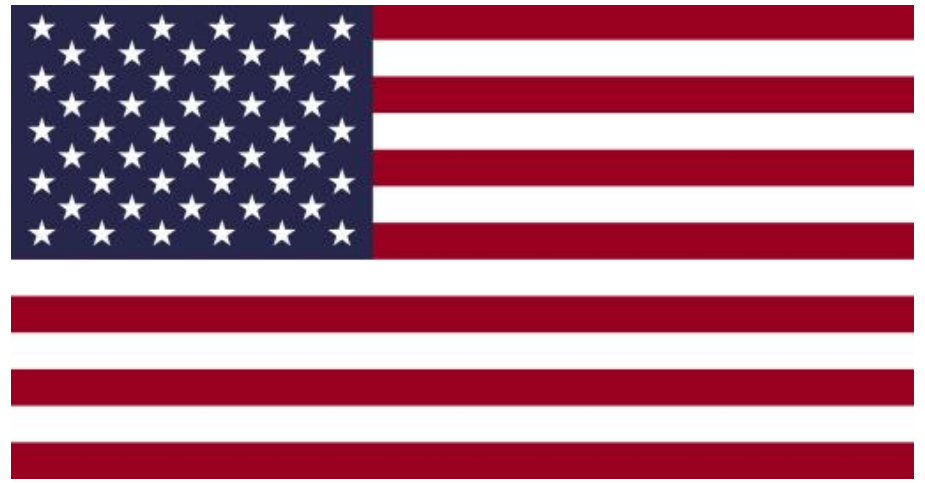
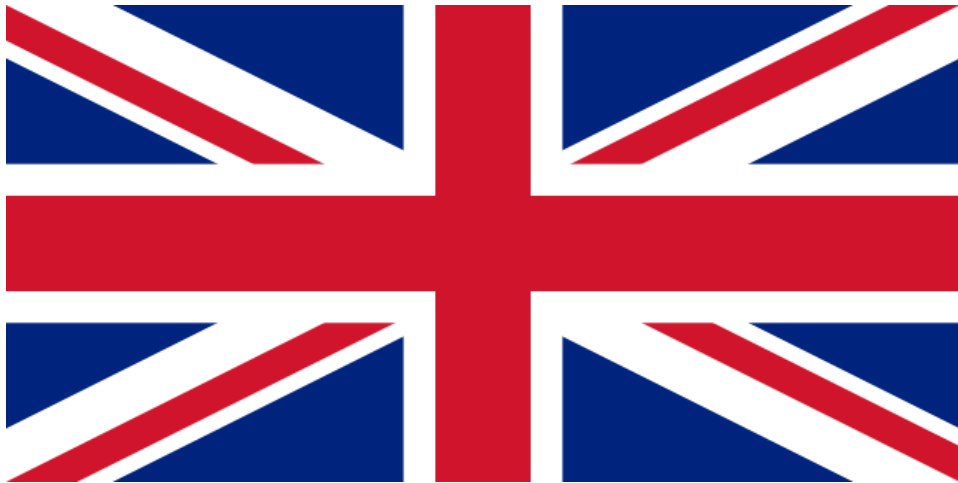
Some studies **have shown**...

Researchers **have discovered**...

Uses:

To connect the past (previous research) with the present (your research).

Which dialect to use?



Common Dialectal Differences

British English

Programme

Autumn

16.00

Honour

Metre

Recognise

Analyse

Analogue

Cancelled

American English

Program

Fall

4:00 PM

Honor

Meter

Recognize

Analyze

Analog

Canceled

Common Dialectal Differences

British English

However I would suggest...

Based on the current evidence
further research would be...

Dr Smith

Yours sincerely

American English

However, I would suggest...

Based on the current evidence,
further research would be...

Dr. Smith

Sincerely yours,



On the Meso Level
PARAGRAPHS

Cultural differences in writing

Group discussion

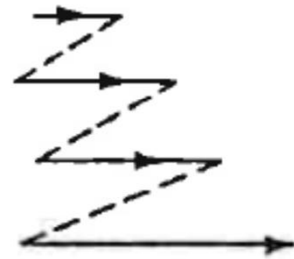
- What differences have you noticed between English academic texts and those in your first language?

Kaplan's (1966) cross-cultural writing conventions*

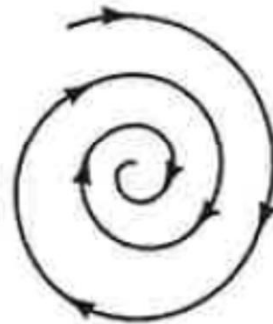
English



Semitic



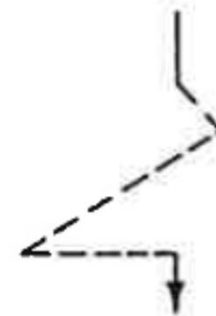
Oriental



Romance



Russian



Differences between Academic Writing in English and your language

- Reader-responsible writing culture – the responsibility for understanding the message is on the reader
- Avoids stating the obvious
- Avoids repetition
- Preference for complicated structures

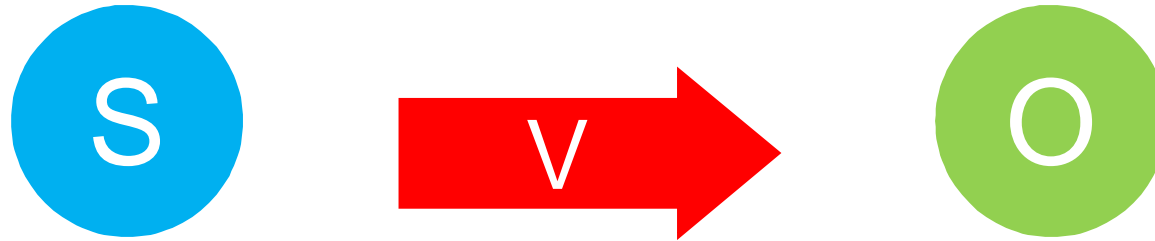
Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: A new typology. In U. Connor & R. B. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 Text* (pp. 141-152). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Differences between Academic Writing in English and your language

- **Writer-responsible** writing culture – the responsibility for getting the message across is on the writer
 - Gives a lot of background information
 - Repetition and summaries
 - Language is clear and simple

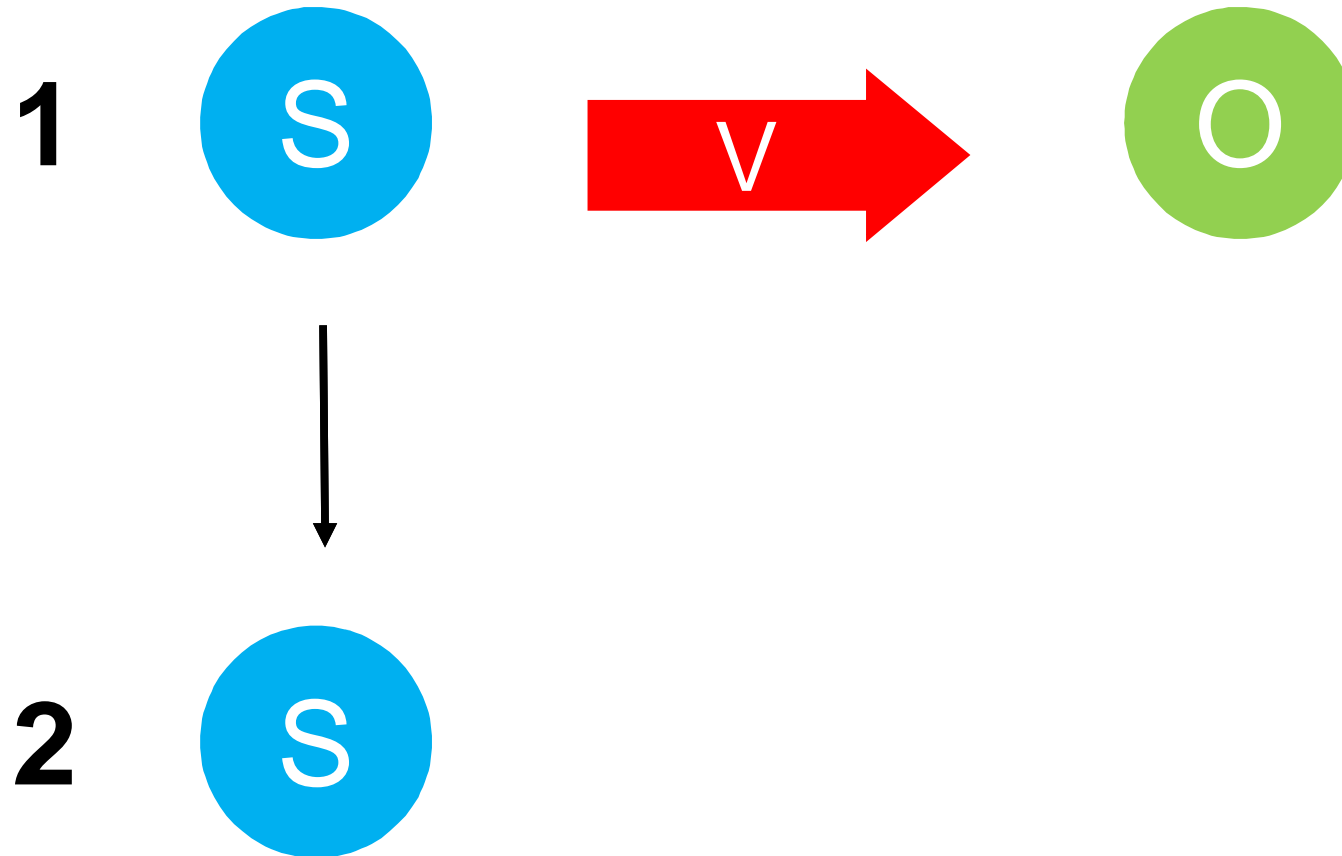
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Cohesion

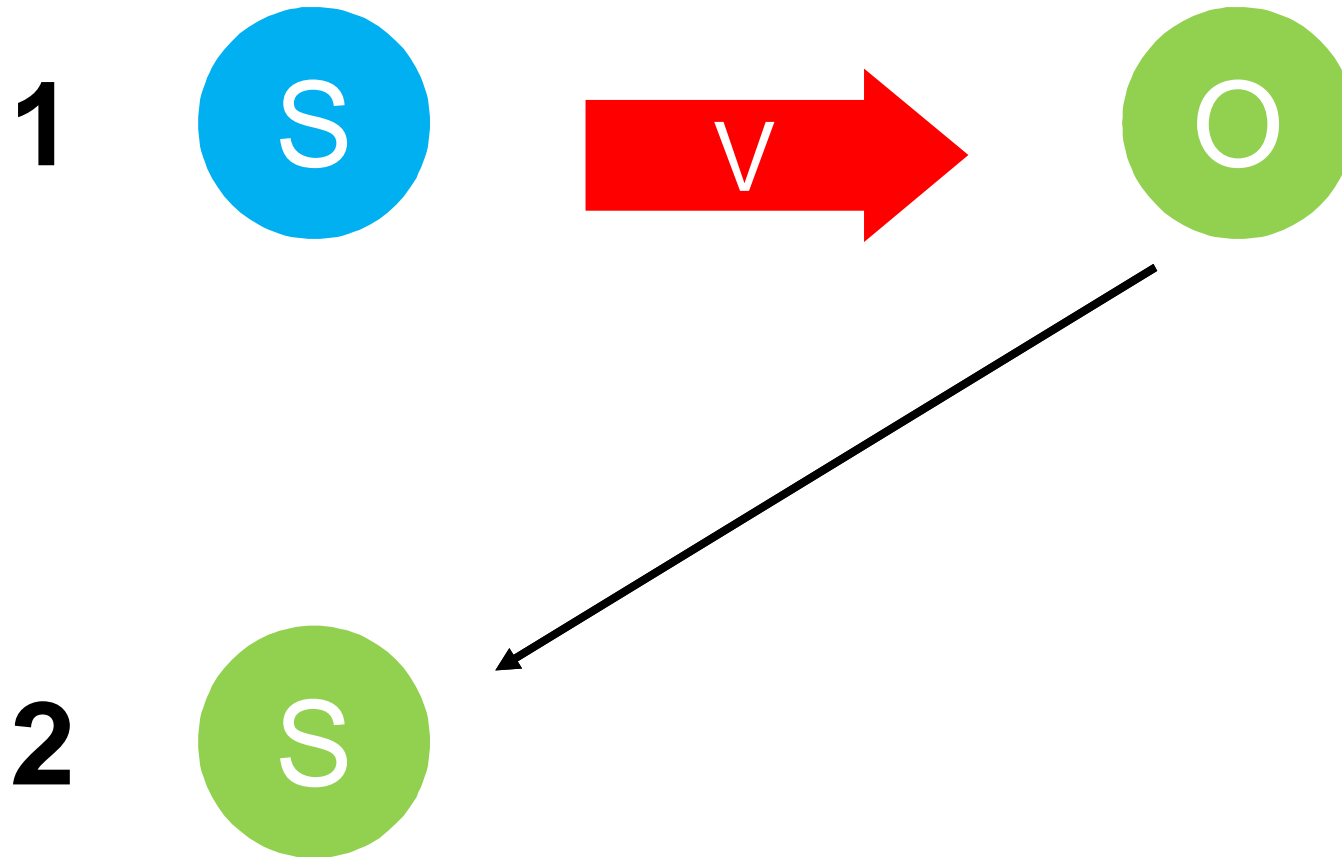


How do you create cohesion in a paragraph?

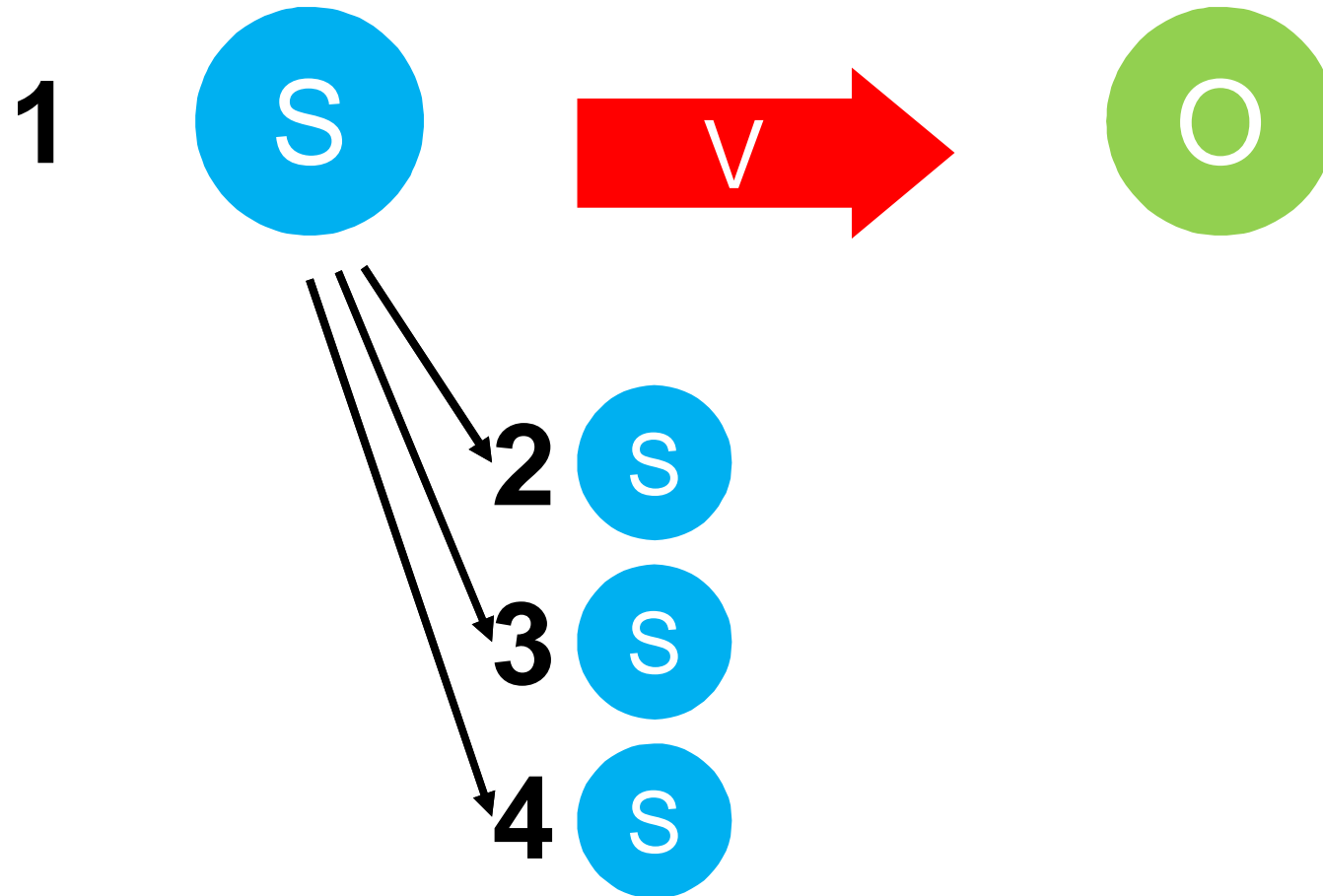
Cohesion – Constant topic



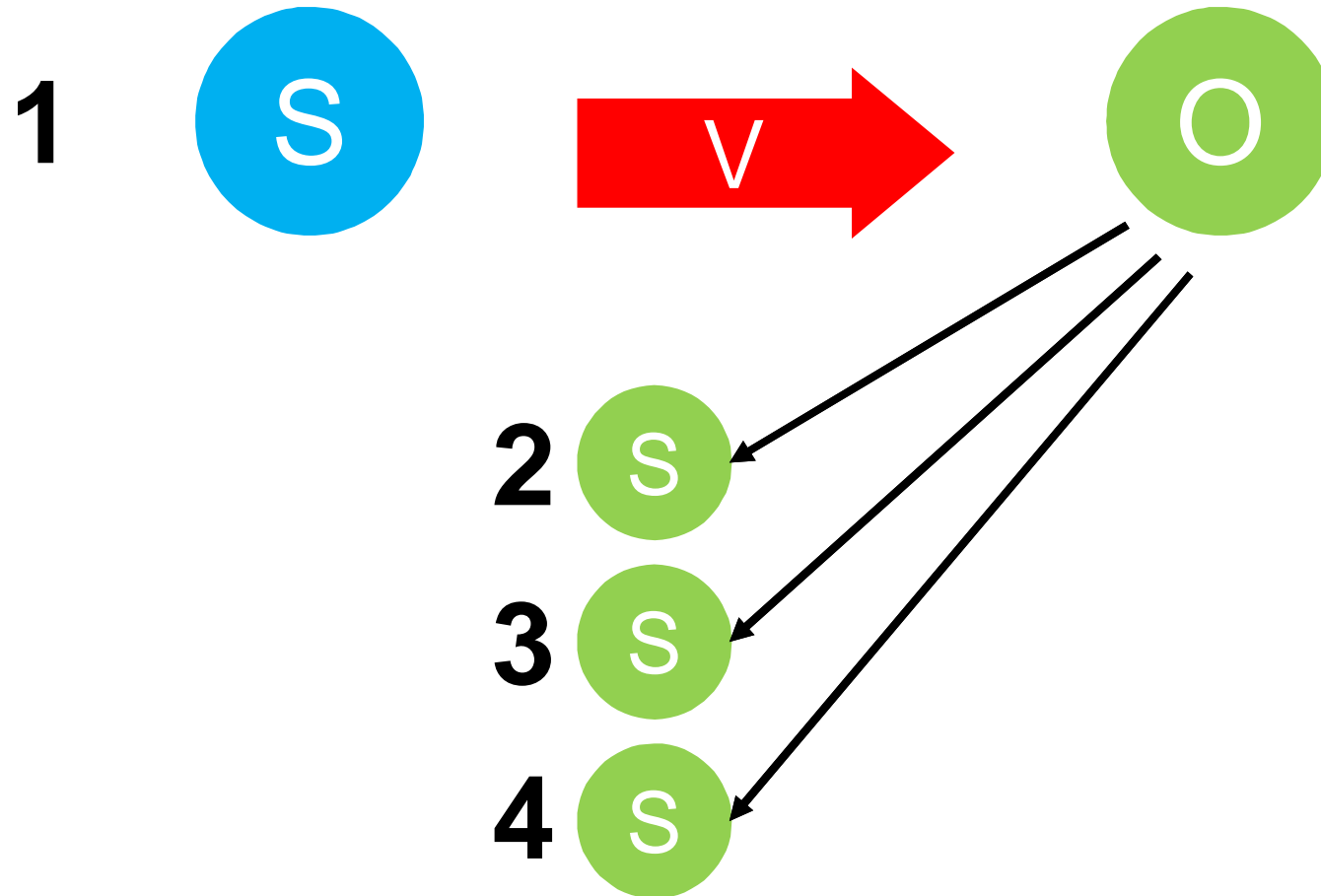
Cohesion – Stepwise topic



Cohesion – Hypertopic



Cohesion – Hypertopic



Logical connectors

Enumerators

Firstly, secondly, thirdly, finally

Addition

In addition, Moreover, Furthermore, and, as well

Contrast

However, Nevertheless, Although, but, Contrary to

Cause and effect

Thus, Therefore, Accordingly, because, as a result of

Strategies to reorder information

1. Passive-Active Shift
2. Equative Shift
3. Animate-Inanimate Shift
4. Personal-Impersonal Shift
5. Means-Purpose Shift
6. Introductory “*It*”
7. Existential “*There*”
8. Resultative –ing clause
9. Purpose clause
10. Split relative clause
11. Nominalization
12. When + -ing
13. Reorder clauses
14. Default subject

<http://sana.aalto.fi/awe/cohesion/infostrux/flow/strategies/index.html>



On the Macro Level
Thesis

Parts of a thesis

Small groups

What are the parts of a thesis?

The Toulmin-Zappen model (Problem-solution pattern)






Arguably, the most important pattern of organization in academic writing.

This model and its variants are commonly found in:

- argumentative and evaluative critical thinking
- Bachelor, Master's and Doctoral thesis introductions and abstracts
- research articles
- research reports and proposals

The Problem-Solution Pattern

Four rhetorical moves

-  **1. Situation**
What is relevant or important about the topic?
 -  **2. Problem**
What is wrong with the current situation?
What is needed or lacking?
 -  **3. Solution**
What is the solution?
 -  **4. Evaluation**
Is this a good solution?
-  If not, repeat move 3 & 4.

Let's practice it...

Watch and complete the Problem-Solution pattern



Problem-solution for AO+ Mist

1 Situation	People shower daily with soap cleansers to avoid smelling bad.
2 Problem	In the process, people may have eliminated the good bacteria from their skin.
3 Solution	People could continue using soap.
4 Evaluation	According to MIT Engineer Dave Whitlock, no one has done clinical trials on taking showers everyday—it is just assumed to be a healthy practice.

3 Solution	People could use AO+ Mist to add good (ammonia-oxidizing) bacteria to our skin.
4 Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some anecdotal evidence of reduced deodorant and moisturizer use.2. Clinical tests will soon be conducted on inflammatory skin conditions such as acne.

Create a research space (CARS)

1 Establishing a territory

STEP 1: MAKING A CENTRALITY CLAIM

(osoittamalla aiheen keskeisyys)

AND/OR

STEP 2: MAKING TOPIC GENERALISATIONS

(esittämällä aiheesta yleistäviä huomautuksia)

AND/OR

STEP 3: REVIEWING ITEMS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

(referoimalla aikaisempia tutkimuksia)

Create a research space (CARS)

2 Establishing a niche

STEP 1A: COUNTER-CLAIMING

(esittämällä vastaväite/ -väitteitä aikaisemmalle tutkimukselle)

OR

STEP 1B: INDICATING A GAP (in previous research)

(osoittamalla aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa olevan aukoja)

OR

STEP 1C: RAISING A QUESTION (about previous research)

(herättämällä kysymyksiä)

OR

STEP 1D: CONTINUING A TRADITION

(ilmoittamalla jatkavansa perinettä)

Create a research space (CARS)

3 Occupying the niche

STEP 1A: OUTLINING PURPOSES (Why?)

(esittämällä tutkimuksen tavoitteet)

OR

STEP 1B: ANNOUNCING PRESENT RESEARCH (What? How?)

(esittämällä oma tutkimusaihe)

STEP 2: ANNOUNCING MAIN FINDINGS

(esittämällä päätulokset)

STEP 3: INDICATING STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

(hahmottamalla artikkelin jäsentely)

STEP 4: EVALUATION OF FINDINGS*

(Arvioimalla tulokset)

The Writing Process

Writing as a Process

Pause to think for a moment...

Before you finish a paper, what steps do you normally take? How long does this process last?

Write down the steps you normal take before handing your final version.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

- "Regurgitator"
- "Procrastinator"
- "Critical"
- "Perfectionist"
- "Information builder"

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

”Regurgitator”

- Relies on information / text produced by others
- Does not create new information, regurgitates information

Tip: Trust your own ideas. Academic writing is about creating new ideas.

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

”Procrastinator”

- Writing is postponed until the last possible moment
- Frustration and negative feelings towards writing

Tip: Trick yourself, ”start” early by creating a document with the title, subheadings, possible references, etc. Establish a schedule to continue.

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

”Critical”

- Writing is difficult, especially getting started
- Once started, writing usually flows
- Own text seems ”childish”
- High expectations for the outcome

Tip: Allow yourself to write for a while without pausing, without criticism. Take a look at it later for improvements.

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

”Perfectionist”

- Always finds room for improvement
- Has difficulties in finishing, deciding something is ”good enough”
- Strives for perfection

Tip: It is a skill to know when to stop ”tweaking”. Writing is never perfect. It is good recognize when it has met the original goals.

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following?

”Information builder”

- Writing a part of the day-to-day job: sometimes better, sometimes not so great
- Writing is about building information
- Writing is a process
- Appreciates feedback

Kniivilä, S., Lindblom-Ylänne, S. & Mäntynen, A. 2007. Tiede ja teksti. Tehoa ja tietoa tutkielman tekemiseen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Writing as a Process

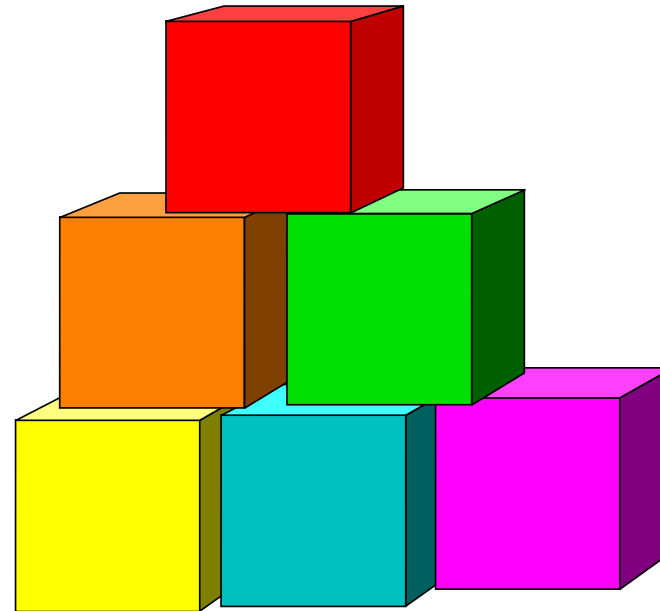
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Writing process

- **Invention:** brainstorm, clustering...
- **Collection:** library, identifying relevant sources, reading, collecting data...
- **Organization:** outlining
- **Drafting**
- **Revising:** ideas
- **Proofreading**



Thank you!

Maurice Forget, *maurice.forget@aalto.fi*