

Academic Writing Q&A Series:

1/“How do I think about an article story and how do I write it?”

Stephanie Krueger (MS/MA/PhD), Independent Consultant

<https://www.fornobia.website/team/>

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About me

- Over 20 years working at the intersection of academic libraries, scholars, and technology
- Over 10 years on a STEM campus
- International career (US native now working/living in Europe)
- Editorial assistance (with formal acknowledgment) for over 40 peer-reviewed STEM articles
- On the editorial board of two journals, one based in Canada and one in Austria
- Independent consultant working mostly with doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and professors
 - All answers in this video reflect my experience in scholarly publishing to date (in the future, some things might change)

1/“How do I think about an article story & how do I write it?”

Answer:

A scholarly/academic/scientific article is not a creative writing project. Ideally, a scholarly research article should be intended to:

- Clearly answer specific, original research questions using quantitative or qualitative research methods
- Follow norms that are laid out in scholarly journal style guides and in other cross-disciplinary style guides, such as the American Psychological Association's (APA's) Publication Manual (current edition is number seven)

If you're interested in storytelling or “communications rhetoric” (the “ancient art of argumentation and discourse”), read more: <https://www.techlib.cz/en/84153-rhetoric>

Basic pointers: the outline is your friend

I personally recommend making an outline for any scholarly article you write

- Based on the preferred style in the journal you wish to publish in
- Structure can vary depending on the journal style guide plus type of article (research article v. review article)
- As always, even before writing a manuscript, the research question(s) you wish to answer and the methods you wish to use (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) should ideally be reviewed for quality by trusted mentors or peers in your discipline

Aim high. Think through your research project carefully far before you start anything, including any data gathering. This also means:

- Conducting a thorough literature review
- Knowing about the state-of-the-art in your area, and
- Fully understanding the research gap your study wishes to fill before you embark on any research project

Basic pointers: New text tools (“AI”)

Always remember that the new writing tools cannot think for you. They respond only to well-considered queries, so remember the old adage: “Garbage in, garbage out”

Many journals now require you to acknowledge you used an AI tool in writing your manuscript

- Example: “The use of AI and AI-assisted technology in writing for Elsevier”:
<https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/the-use-of-generative-ai-and-ai-assisted-technologies-in-writing-for-elsevier>

Learn more about tools you can use in the research and writing process:

- <https://www.techlib.cz/en/84766-searching-with-ai>
- <https://www.techlib.cz/en/84783-tools-to-support-writing>

Sample outline/structure: JARS-Quant

APA's webpage for JARS-Quant: <https://apastyle.apa.org/jars/quantitative> & <https://apastyle.apa.org/jars/quant-table-1.pdf>

Useful for all early career researchers, regardless of discipline, because it includes definitions of what should be in each section. For example, after the introduction/literature review, focus on describing:

- Data collection
- Quality of measurements
- Instrumentation
- Conditions and design
- Data diagnostics
- Analytical strategies
- Results

Note that the following are not in the JARS-Quant descriptions, but are found in most manuscripts:

- Conclusion
- Acknowledgments

Additional learning resources: YouTube

“APA Style Journal Article Reporting Standards” by APA Publishing:
<https://youtu.be/qzcfhn4sK6Q>

- Trusted nonprofit publisher
- Describes why clear communications/clear writing are important for communicating research work to others and improving the quality of the scholarly record, including that a manuscript has sufficient detail for understanding
- Describes what is essential to both authors and editors in writing research articles. Understanding the perspective of editors (i.e., what they’re looking for) can increase the likelihood that your work will be published
- Includes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research study types
- Notes how research, overall, is ultimately conducted to “improve people’s lives.” This is an inspiring ideal (to me, at least!)

Additional learning resources: YouTube

“10 Ways to Use ChatGPT to Write Research Papers (ETHICALLY) in 2023” by Academic English Now: <https://youtu.be/lqfYYxmbTuM?si=lclmZN-8UzIpVVNy>

- A commercial writing/editing service
- Nice overview of three things ChatGPT can't do
- Provides examples of specific queries related to article writing in ChatGPT
 - Making title suggestions from an abstract you've written
 - Writing an abstract
 - Writing a research gap
 - Writing a research question
 - Making a research question more specific
 - Writing a literature review
 - Structure a literature review
 - Writing an introduction
 - Writing an introduction on a topic that hasn't been published yet
 - Writing an introduction from the abstract

What we learned today

- A scholarly article is not a creative writing exercise
- Journal style guides are helpful tools and often include outlines
- Good preparation makes writing easier, especially the introduction
- Learning resources

Need more assistance?

- Other videos in this series
- Schedule an in-person or virtual consultation with NTK's team,
<https://www.techlib.cz/en/83810-consultations>