|  |
| --- |
| A strong introduction is important if you want to make a good first impression on your reader.  “A good first impression can work wonders.”  *J. K. Rowling(2003)*  “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”  *Unknown* |

The Structure of Introductions

**Task 1: Recalling previous knowledge**

Think back to EAP 1 and the introductions you wrote for an argumentative essay. In groups or pairs, describe the “typical” structure of an introduction to an argument. What are the stages that are typically included in such an introduction?

Introductions to argumentative essays are both similar to and different from introductions to research papers. An introduction to a research paper serves several purposes. The main purpose is to provide readers with an orientation to the report, giving them the perspective they need to understand the detailed (and often technical) information coming in the later sections. Another purpose, however, is to provide a justification for your research (i.e., showing why you and your research are important to the field), and yet another purpose is to “show off” how much you know about the topic.

Although the structure of introductions can vary from report to report, a “typical” introduction will often have five parts, or stages. These five stages are illustrated in the figure below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Stage 1 | **the setting** | General statements about a field of research to provide the reader with a setting for the problem to be reported |  | General |
|  |  | Stage 2 | **previous studies** | More specific statements about the aspects of the problem already studied by other researchers |  |  |
|  |  | Stage 3 | **the “gap”** | Statement(s) that indicate the need for more investigation |  |  |
|  |  | Stage 4 | **statement of purpose** | Very specific statements giving the purpose or objective of the writer’s investigation |  |  |
|  |  | Stage 5 | **justification** | Optional statement(s) that give a value or justification for carrying out the study |  | Specific |

*Figure 1 – The five stages of an introduction*

**Task 2: Comparing and Contrasting**

What are some of the differences and similarities of introductions for an argumentative essay and introductions for a research report?

**Task 3: Identification**

The following text is an example of an introduction to a research report about the social impact of the Internet. Read this introduction and then identify which parts correspond to the five stages presented above.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name of Stage** | **Sentence Numbers** |
| 1Whether the Internet plays a positive or a negative role in people’s social lives is a topic of ongoing debate. 2Several scholars have reported negative effects, ranging from an increased rate of depression (Kraut et al, 1998) to a reduction in the amount of time spent with family and friends (Nie, 2000). 3However, other scholars have found that the Internet enhances social life by developing new ways of connecting with family and friends (Rainie, 2000). 4Lenhart (2001), for example, found that teenagers in particular use the Internet to maintain their social connections, while Fox (2001) reported that the elderly are more likely than any other age group to go online every day.  5One reason for these different findings regarding the social impact of the Internet is that surveys have been conducted at different points in the Internet’s development. 6Patterns of usages which prevailed in the late 1990s do not correspond to patterns of usage in the middle of the first decade of the new millennium. 7One way of measuring the Internet’s impact on social life more accurately is to track changes in the use of email by users over a period of time. 8This study reports on the use of email by a group of users in a large Australian city over a period of five years. 9The study examines changes in the extent to which email is used to maintain contact with family members, and compares this to users self-reports of the extent to which they feel connected to family members.  Source: Brick (2006) |  |  |

Writers do not always arrange the stages of their introductions in this *exact* way. Sometimes a writer interrupts one stage with another, and then goes back to the previous stage. Sometimes Stage 2 is completely separate from the rest of the introduction. (In final year projects and PhD dissertations, for example, the literature review is often a separate chapter!) Sometimes Stage 5 is omitted entirely, and sometimes Stage 4 (the statement of purpose) is put at the very beginning of the introduction. However, the general plan given here is a very common structure and is the easiest for beginning researchers to write.

**Task 4:** **Extending your Learning Independently**

Find an academic research report related to your major or related to a course you are taking this semester. Photocopy (or print) the introduction of the article and analyze it by answering the following questions.

1. Does the introduction contain all five stages? If so, were the stages in the same order as we have presented here?
2. Do the authors follow a general 🡪 specific structure?
3. What research question were the authors trying to answer?
4. In your opinion, is the introduction well organized and easy to read?

Your teacher may ask you to share what you discovered in the next lesson.

Stage 1: The Setting

As we have seen, Stage 1 of an introduction presents the setting for your paper. You should write this stage so that it provides your readers with the background necessary to see the particular topic of your research in relation to a general area of study. In order to do this, start with obvious, generally accepted information about your topic. Then, step by step, move the reader closer to your specific topic. You may do this in just a few sentences or in several paragraphs. (Sometimes it will be done in several pages!)

You can think of this stage as a process of first, establishing a “territory” for your readers; then, isolating one “city” within this territory; then finally, leading your reader to one “district” within that city.

**Stage 1: The Setting**

1. Begin with accepted statements of fact related to your general area (your “territory”).
2. Within the general area, identify one sub-area (“your city”).
3. Indicate your specific area (your “district”).

**Task 5: Analysis**

The following is an example of Stage 1 (the setting) of an introduction to a research report about health care in Hong Kong. Read the selection and then answer the questions that follow. When you are finished, compare your answers with a classmate.

|  |
| --- |
| **The Roles Of Advanced Nurse Practitioners**  1Health care systems around the world are undergoing major changes and reforms. 2The major driving forces for these changes and reforms are the escalating costs of health care, the aging of the population, advances in medical technology, and the demand for high quality health care services. 3These factors have resulted in restructuring and re-engineering the health care delivery systems in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and European countries.  4Hong Kong is also encountering changes in its existing health care system. 5As a result, the Hong Kong Hospital Authority proposed to expand the nurse’s role in delivery of direct patient care and enhance professional accountability. 6The development of advanced nurse practitioners (ANP) seems to be one of the strategies proposed by the Hospital Authority to tackle the health care crisis in Hong Kong, since nursing represents the largest group of health professionals in the health care system.  Source: Adapted from Au (2009) |

1. Which sentence(s) in the introduction make obvious statements or statements that would be accepted as fact concerning the general area?
2. Which sentence(s) focuses on one sub-area of the general area of study?
3. Which sentence(s) indicates the author’s specific topic?

Linking Ideas – Review of Information Flow

In order to lead readers smoothly through the ideas in Stage 1 (the setting), writers often link sentences by making use of old and new information structures. This is done by placing old information (information already known to the reader) at the beginning of sentences and placing new information at the end.

New information in one sentence often then becomes old information in a later sentence. Old/new information structures are thus a way of building up ideas by going from what the reader knows to the unknown.

Task 6: Identification

Re-read the “setting” stage of the introduction on Advanced Nurse Practitioners. The underlined words and phrases are ideas in the beginnings of the sentences, and express given (or “old”) information that is related to the “new” information in the previous sentence. Identify the information flow structure by drawing a line from these underlined phrases to the related “new” in the previous sentence. The first one has been done as an example.

|  |
| --- |
| **The Roles Of Advanced Nurse Practitioners**  1Health care systems around the world are undergoing major **changes and reforms**. 2The major driving forces for **these changes and reforms** are the escalating costs of health care, the aging of the population, advances in medical technology, and the demand for high quality health care services. **3These factors** have resulted in restructuring and re-engineering the health care delivery systems in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and European countries.  **4Hong Kong** is also encountering changes in its existing health care system. 5As a result, the **Hong Kong Hospital Authority** proposed to expand the nurse’s role in delivery of direct patient care and enhance professional accountability. 6The **development of advanced nurse practitioners (**ANP) seems to be one of the strategies proposed by the Hospital Authority to tackle the health care crisis in Hong Kong, since nursing represents the largest group of health professionals in the health care system.  Source: Adapted from Au (2009) |

Language Focus – Definite and Indefinite Articles

As you know, articles in English can either be definite (“the”) or indefinite (“a” or “an”). This sounds simple; but as you also know, choosing the correct article is extremely difficult for non-native speakers of English. The “Handy Guide to Article Usage” (EAP2 – Unit 02 – Appendix) can help you choose correctly.

**Task 7: Using the Definite Article**

The first step in choosing the correct article is to decide if the noun is specified or unspecified. Look at the explanation notes in the “Handy Guide to Article Usage” and decide if the underlined words in the following sentences are specified or unspecified. If the noun is specified, write “the” in the blank; if the noun is unspecified, do not write anything in the blank. Be ready to justify your answer with reference to the explanatory notes in the guide.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_ health care **systems** around \_\_\_\_\_\_ **world** are undergoing \_\_\_\_\_\_ major **reforms**.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_ health care **system** in Hong Kong is also encountering \_\_\_\_\_\_ **changes**.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_ **water** is essential for \_\_\_\_\_\_ **life**.
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_ **water** in Tolo Harbour is polluted.
5. \_\_\_\_\_\_ **Internet** plays \_\_\_\_\_\_ important **role** in \_\_\_\_\_\_ people’s **lives**.
6. One way of measuring \_\_\_\_\_\_ Internet’s **impact** on \_\_\_\_\_\_ **social life** more accurately is to track changes in \_\_\_\_\_\_ **use** of email by \_\_\_\_\_\_ **users** over \_\_\_\_\_\_ **period** of time.

**Task 8: Countable and Uncountable Nouns**

The next step in choosing the correct article is deciding if the noun is countable or uncountable. Write “C” next to the following words that are *usually* countable, and “U” next to the words that are *usually* uncountable. If a word can be either countable or uncountable, depending on the context, write “C/U”.

Use the “Handy Guide” to help you make a decision, and check a dictionary for individual words. Be ready to explain your answers.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Water  Food  Research  Investigation  Experiment  Survey | Equipment  Information  Homework  Theory  Depression  Change | Happiness  Knowledge  Economics  Weather  Electricity  Life |

Now go back to the exercise in Task 7, and consider the nouns that are not specified. If the noun is uncountable, write an “X” in the blank (these nouns do not need an article).

[**Note**: Uncountable nouns that are specified should take the article “the”. It is only unspecified, uncountable nouns that do not need an article. Compare sentences 3 and 4 as an example.]

**Task 9: Singular versus Plural**

The third step in choosing the correct article is to decide if the countable, unspecified nouns are singular or plural.

Go back to the exercise in Task 7, and consider the nouns that are unspecified and countable. If the noun is singular, write either “a” or “a” in the blank; if the noun is plural, write an “X” in the blank (these nouns do not need an article).

**Task 10: Putting it all together**

The following paragraph is from Stage 1 (the setting) of an introduction to a report in mechanical engineering. Fill in the blanks with the articles a, an, the, or the plural –s where necessary. Some blanks do not require filling in.

Recent concerns about \_\_\_\_\_ expenditure of energy\_ for human transportation\_ have emphasized \_\_\_\_\_ need for more efficient passenger vehicle\_. \_\_\_\_\_ result has been \_\_\_\_\_ increase in \_\_\_\_\_ use of lightweight structural materials in \_\_\_\_\_ manufacture of automobile\_. Another result has been \_\_\_\_\_ increased popularity of bicycle\_ for transportation. Because of this interest in bicycle transportation, \_\_\_\_\_ research has been conducted at \_\_\_\_\_ University of California in recent years to develop \_\_\_\_\_ lightweight aluminum bicycle.

Task 11: Guided Writing

Write Stage 1 (the setting) of an Introduction (one or two paragraphs). Your topic will be “World Food Shortages in the Next Decade”

1. Imagine you are a researcher working for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. For the last year, you have been gathering data that will allow you to predict the location and severity of food shortages for the coming decade. You must now write a report to be published by the U.N. stating your findings and making your predictions.
2. In your setting (Stage 1), you should establish a frame of reference for your readers, an orientation that will give them the perspective needed to understand your report. Some of the related ideas are listed here.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| import/export balances  food: essential for human life  food shortages  social unrest | climatic changes  new technology  population growth  rich and poor countries  hunger |

Select some of these ideas to use in Stage 1 (do not try to use them all). If you want, you can add other ideas of your own. Decide on an order to present the ideas you have selected.

1. Now write Stage 1 (the setting) on the topic of “World Food Shortages”. Remember to move from general to specific ideas by progressing from a general area to a sub-area to your specific topic. Also, remember to use old/new information structures to link your ideas and use articles correctly.

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|  |
| --- |
| **Writing Up Your Own Research**  Now that you have practiced writing the setting for the introduction to a research report, apply what you have learned so far to the topic you selected for your own research project. Write a setting (Stage 1) for the introduction to your study. Remember to move from a general area to a sub-area and then to your specific topic. Limit your setting to one or two paragraphs.  When you finish your setting, remember to save your work. The writing you do for this exercise may become part of your research report that you will submit at the end of the semester. |

Stage 2: Reviewing Previous Research

In Stage 1 of your introduction, you establish a setting for your research topic. In Stage 2, you review the findings of other researchers who have already published in your area of interest.

Stage 2 of your introduction has three main functions. First, it continues the process started in Stage 1 of giving your readers background information needed to understand your study. Secondly, it shows your readers that you are familiar with the important research that has been carried out in your area. Thirdly, it establishes your study as one link in a chain of research that is developing and enlarging the knowledge in your field.

Order of Information from outside sources

There are many different ways to arrange the information in Stage 2. For example, it is possible to arrange your Stage 2 citations from those most distantly related to your study to those most closely related. You may also arrange the citations in chronological order (according to the time), or you can group the information according to the different approaches to the research problem taken by different authors.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ordering of Citations | | |
| Citations ordered from  *distantly* related  to *closely*  related | |  | | --- | | Citations ordered *chronologically*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (earliest)  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (latest) | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Citations grouped by *approach*   |  | | --- | | One approach |  |  | | --- | | Another approach |  |  | | --- | | Still another approach | | |

Task 12: Arrangement of Citations

|  |
| --- |
| The following citations are taken from Stage 2 of the introduction to a research report from the field of nutrition. The citations are given here in jumbled order. Number the citations in the order that you feel they should appear in Stage 2 for this report.  Food Habits of Undergraduate Students at New Mexico State University   1. \_\_\_\_\_ Smith and Starvick (2005) surveyed the food habits of 595 university students in Oregon and found that the men generally have better diets than the women. 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Litman et al. (2003) reported that green and yellow vegetables and liver (all nutritionally desirable foods) were not liked by teenagers in California secondary schools. They also found that teachers have almost no influence on their students’ food habits. 3. \_\_\_\_ Studies of the food habits of young school children have shown that the diets of primary school children are often deficient in ascorbic acid, calcium, and iron (Lantz et al, 2009; Patterson, 2013). 4. \_\_\_\_\_ Several studies have been conducted on the food habits of students from a variety of different age groups. 5. \_\_\_\_\_ Johnson (2008) examined the nutrition habits of a group of school children and found that their mothers lacked information about the importance of milk and foods rich in ascorbic acid. 6. \_\_\_\_\_ Studies done with adolescent children report similar findings (Ohlson and Hart, 2007; Underwood, 2009). 7. \_\_\_\_\_ A number of studies have also been conducted using both male and female university students as subjects. |

**Language Use – Verb Tense when Presenting Previous Research**

When reporting information from previous studies, we usually use the ***present***, ***present perfect***, or ***past tense***. The present tense is usually used when the information you are citing is generally accepted as true.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Present Tense (information accepted as true)** | | | |
| Topic | Verb | Generally accepted statement | Citation |
| Nutrient resorption | **is** | a common phenomenon in forest trees | (Kramer, 2009). |
| The factors that control the concentration of aluminum in seawater | **are** | poorly known | (Jones, 2015). |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Author/Citation | Reporting Verb (present) | Generally accepted statement |
| As Richards (2016) | **notes**, | family conflict causes low self-esteem. |

The ***present perfect tense*** is usually used in citations where the focus is on the research area of several authors.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Present Perfect (information from several authors)** | | |
| Authors | Verb  (present perfect) | Topic |
| Madsen (2015) and Randall (2013) | **have studied** | the relationship between classroom adjustment and mobility. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Verb  (present perfect) | Citation |
| The physiology of annual plants | **has been studied** | by several authors (Miller, 2004; Jones, 2003; Klein, 2002). |

The ***simple past tense*** is used when reporting information that is limited to specific studies.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Simple Past (findings from specific studies)** | | | | |
| Author | Citation | Verb of report  (past) | that | Topic |
| Allington (2013) | | **found**  **showed**  **reported**  **observed** | that teachers allocated equal time to both groups. | |

**Task 13: Completion**

In the following example of Stage 2 from the field of psychology, fill in the correct tense for each verb given in brackets.

|  |
| --- |
| **Listening comprehension:**  **The effects of sex, age, passage structure and speech rate**  The learning of verbal information is a two-stage process. First of all, students must understand the meaning of the sentence they have just heard and then, secondly, they must relate the information it contains to what they have learned earlier and which is now stored in memory. A number of authors \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (advance) this active view of learning (Bartlett, 2002; Ausubel, 2008; Clark, 2006). Rogers (2011) and Franks (2012) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (argue) that this two-stage process operates at the level of sentences. Barclay (2002) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (develop) this idea, stating that when two of more sentences contain information about the same subject, the learner abstracts the information from the sentence and tends to integrate it into a whole.  Riding (2005) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (find) that after listening to a story, ten-year-old children recalled details that were closely positioned to each other better than the more distantly positioned ones. Similarly, Kieras (2008) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (study) reading time in adult subjects using short paragraphs as the learning material. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (note) that reading time was less when a sentence was preceded by those containing related information than when one or more unrelated sentences intervened between directly related ones. |

**Task 14: Critical Thinking**

Re-read the introduction section of the “Reading Habits” report presented in the Appendix to Unit 1. In pairs or groups, brainstorm additional information from outside sources that would be useful for the writer to search, locate, and incorporate into the introduction. Be ready to share your ideas with the rest of the class and explain the reasons for your ideas.



|  |
| --- |
| **Writing Up Your Own Research**  Apply what you have learned so far to your selected research topic. Locate and read articles related to your research and write up Stage 2 of your introduction.  When you finish, remember to save your work. The writing you do for this exercise may become part of the research report that you will submit at the end of the semester. |

**Stage 3: Identifying a “Gap”**

|  |
| --- |
| **Alternatives for Stage 3**   1. You may indicate that the previous research described in Stage 2 is **inadequate** because an important aspect of the research area has been ignored. 2. You may indicate that there is an **unresolved conflict** among the authors of previous studies concerning the research topic. 3. You may indicate that that an examination of the previous literature suggest an **extension** of the topic, or raises a new research question not previously considered by other workers in your field. 4. You may indicate that research has focused on a **limited type of subjects** (for example, the subjects in the research reviewed were all American or European), and that it is important to determine if similar results can be obtained using other types of subjects (for example, Hong Kong students). |

After you have presented a setting and discussed the previous work of other researchers, the final part of the introduction (Stages 3, 4, and 5) focuses the attention of the reader on the **specific research problem** you will be dealing with in the body of your report. Stage 3 indicates an area that *has not been treated* in the previous literature review, but that is important from the point of view of your own work.

By indicating some kind of gap left by earlier studies, Stage 3 prepares the reader for your own study.

(Stage 4 formally announces *the purpose* of your research and Stage 5 indicates possible *benefits or applications* of your work.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage 3: The Gap** | | |
| Gap | Research topic | |
| However, few studies have reported on  However, there is little information available on | the effects of computer assisted instruction.  the air flow rate on simple flat plate solar collectors. | |
| **Task 15: Analysis**  The following is an introduction from a research report from the field of business and finance. First read the introduction, and then answer the questions that follow.  **Concepts of Business and Financial Risk**  1There is considerable current interest in methods of limiting the business risk to which farmers are exposed. 2Some approaches to business risk modification involve insurance, government programs, weather modification, and innovations of individual farmers.  3It is recognized that the introduction or modification of risk in the production process affects the pattern of resource allocation and in turn the level of production (Dillon, 2009; Wiens & Wolgen, 2000). 4We suggest that there is also a financial response to business risk modification. 5The difference is important in that business risk and financial risk may well be trade-offs in the risk behavior of farmers. 6Thus, a decline in business risk would lead to the acceptance of greater financial risk, reducing the effects of the diminished business risk on total risk.  7While most of the literature on risk and risk response only deals with production and price risk (i.e., business risk), we intend to introduce the notion of financial risk explicitly into the decision-making process. 8In this paper we present a conceptual framework for linking production and investment decisions to the financing decision via a risk constraint.  \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*   1. Which sentence in the preceding introduction contains Stage 3?   Sentence \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   1. Does the entire sentence correspond to Stage 3, or only part of the sentence?   All \_\_\_\_\_ Part \_\_\_\_\_   1. What word(s) helped you recognize the beginning of Stage 3?   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | |

**Language Use – Stage 3 Signal Words**

Special signal words are commonly used to indicate the beginning of Stage 3. Connectors such as *however* are used for this purpose. The connector is followed immediately by a *gap statement* in the present or present perfect tense. This gap statement often contains modifiers such as *few*, *little*, or *no*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage 3: Signaling the Gap** | | |
| Signal word | Gap (present or present perfect) | Research topic |
| ***However***, | ***few*** studies ***have reported*** on  very ***little*** ***is known*** about  there ***is*** ***little*** information available on | the effects of computer assisted instruction. |

Subordinating conjunctions like *although* and *while* can also be used to signal Stage 3. If you use these kinds of signal words, you should write a complex sentence, using modifiers like *some*, *many*, or *much* in the first clause, and modifiers like *little*, *few*, or *no* in the second clause.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage 3: Signaling the Gap (continued)** | | |
| Signal word | Previous work  (present or present perfect) | Gap + Topic |
| ***Although***  ***While*** | ***some*** studies ***are*** available on X,  ***many*** studies ***have been done*** on X,  ***much*** research ***has been devoted*** to X, | ***little*** information is available on Y. |

Notice that nouns like *research*, *information*, and *work* are ***uncountable*** and are therefore followed by ***singular*** verb forms.

|  |
| --- |
| **Task 16: Completion**  The following excerpts are taken from different introductions, and each contains an example of Stage 3. Fill in each blank space with an appropriate signal word.   1. **The Effect of Computer–Assisted Instruction on Computer Literacy of Students**   …thus, the research suggests that computer assisted instruction (CAI) is somewhat more effective than conventional instruction in promoting student achievement. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, there is very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ research that reveals how CAI affects students’ knowledge about computers.   1. **Chemical Effects on Vulcanized Rubber**   …Spock (1972) studied the failure of rubber strips due to repeated stretching. The findings indicated that the process is caused by gradual tearing. The tear begins as a small flaw and then gradually increases until complete failure occurs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ there is some evidence that chemical processes may also contribute to rubber fatigue, there is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ research available concerning this possibility. |

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| **Writing Up Your Own Research**  Review the information that you collected from the library related to our own research topic. What kind of “gap” can you identify in the articles you have read? Write a Stage 3 statement to reflect this gap. |

**Stage 4 – The Statement of Purpose**

Stage 4 serves to state as concisely as possible the specific **objective(s)** of your research report. This stage, the statement of purpose, thus follows directly from Stage 3 because it answers the need for additional research expressed in Stage 3.

The following “frames” may be useful when writing your statement of purpose:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The Language of the Statement of Purpose** | | | |
| The purpose of this report  The aim of this study  The objective of this paper | | is to | investigate …  find out …  determine …  analyze … |
| This paper  This research | | aims to | investigate …  determine … |
| This paper  This report | investigates …  analyzes …  presents … | | |

**Stage 4 and Your Research Question**

Your statement of purpose should be directly related to your research question. Although you might not need to include the research question *explicitly* in your report, the statement of purpose should be written so that your reader can *infer* the research question behind your study.

If the implied research question is a *yes or no question*, the connecting words *whether* or *if* are used in Stage 4 and a modal auxiliary *would* or *could* accompanies the verb.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage 4 – The Research Question and the Statement of Purpose**  **Implied Yes/No Question** | |
| Research Question | Statement of Purpose |
| Is an automatic measurement system suitable for classroom demonstrations? | The purpose of this project is to determine ***if*** an automatic measurement system ***would*** be suitable for classroom demonstrations. |

When the implied research question is an information question, you should use an infinitive or a noun phrase. Do **not** use if/whether.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage 4 – The Research Question and the Statement of Purpose**  **Implied Information Question** | | |
| Research Question | | Statement of Purpose |
| What is the distribution of Silver Sharks in the South China Sea? | | The purpose of this project is to determine the distribution of Silver Sharks in the South China Sea.  This paper reports on the distribution of Silver Sharks in the South China Sea. |
| **Task 17: Transformation**  Here are several research questions implying different experimental purposes. Change each question to a Stage 4 statement of purpose.   1. What are the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs? 2. Are bacteria counts different under transient and steady-state conditions using the direct microscope method? 3. How do Hong Kong university students enjoy spending their spare time? | | |

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| --- |
| **Writing Up Your Own Research**  Reconsider the research question(s) for your project. Now that you have read about the area of your study, do you think your research focus has changed? If so, write a statement of purpose reflecting this new focus. If not, write a statement of purpose reflecting your original focus. |

**Stage 5 – The Justification**

In Stage 5 you justify your research on the basis of some possible value or benefit the work may have to other researchers in the field or to people working in practical situations. (Note: Stage 5 is not included in every introduction.)

|  |
| --- |
| **Task 18: Analysis**  Sometimes Stage 5 is combined with Stage 4 in the same sentence. In each of the following sentences, draw a slash (/) to indicate where Stage 4 (the statement of purpose) ends and Stage 5 (the justification) begins.   1. This study investigates groundwater conditions in order to evaluate the general hydrologic situation in the area under study. 2. The purpose of this study is to determine the food-buying habits of wives in order to make recommendations to those responsible for planning courses in consumer education. 3. This paper discusses the effect of soil temperature on Verticillium wilt disease in pepper plants with a view towards explaining the irregular occurrence of the disease in California. |

**Language Use – Hedging**

Stage 5, the justification of your research, is usually written in a way that suggests an attitude of *tentativeness* on the part of the author. When reporting your own study, you should not sound too sure of the benefits, either practical or theoretical, of your work. Instead, you should sound more cautious. This is accomplished in Stage 5 by using ***modal auxiliary verbs*** in order to hedge the value of the research.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage 5: Using Modal Auxiliaries to hedge** | | |
| Your research | Modal  Auxiliary | Justification |
| The research described here | **could** | inform teachers how to make better use of technology during lectures. |
| This study | **may** | lead to a better understanding of students’ attitudes towards independent learning. |

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| **Task 19: Fill-in**  Some of the following statements present only a statement of purpose, while others present both a statement of purpose and a justification. Fill in an appropriate modal auxiliary (would, could, may) in each black space.   1. The study reported here aims to determine whether solar space-heating and domestic hot-water systems to single-family residences \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be economically competitive with conventional gas systems. 2. This paper examines patterns of health-care use. It attempts to determine if public health education programs for low socioeconomic level consumers \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ result in an increased use of the service. 3. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the food buying practices of housewives. The information collected here \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be useful to those who are responsible for planning course work in consumer education. 4. This report investigates the history of locally owned retail clothing stores in the Southwest. The perspectives of the successes and failures in this retail sector \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be of use to those who are considering entering the market in this area. |

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| **Writing Up Your Own Research**  Look back at the material that you wrote during this unit. Write a statement to justify your research. Then revise your entire introduction, including all 5 stages. Submit your introduction to your teacher. |