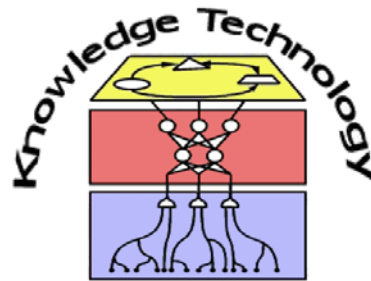


# Seminar Papers – A Quick Guide

Content Structure and References

Dr. Sven Magg



<http://www.informatik.uni-hamburg.de/WTM/>

# Why this guide?

## ■ Why talk about content structure?

- In past seminars often papers were not what we've expected
- Clear gap between what we expect and what many people think is expected
- Magic words: **Critical evaluation**

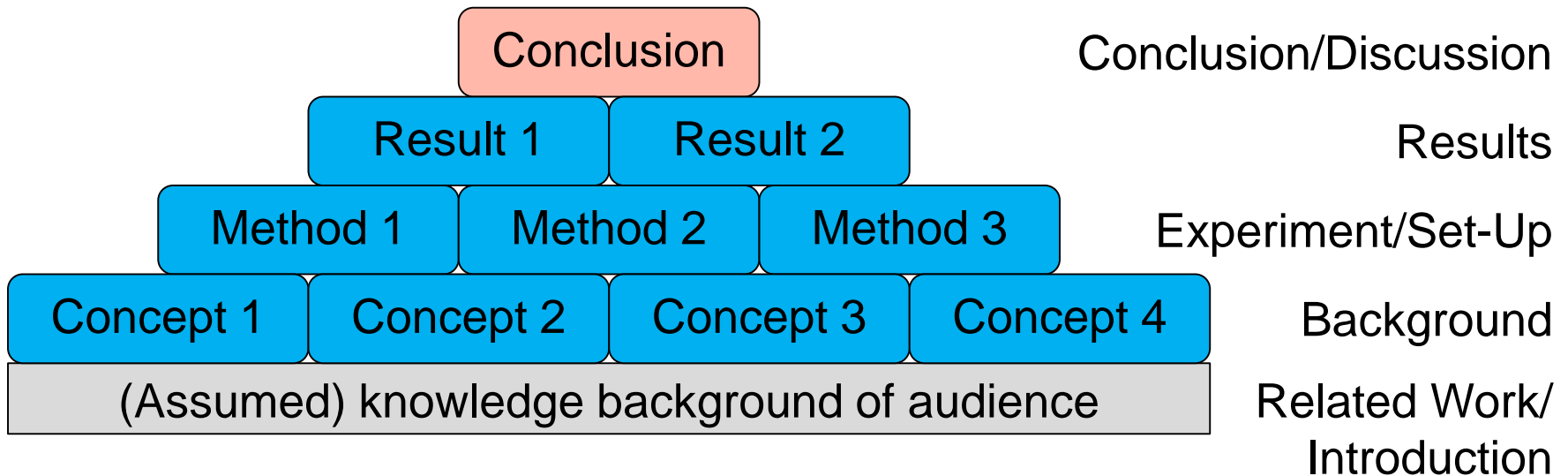
## ■ Why talk about correct referencing?

- There is a thin line between bad referencing and a **plagiarism** allegation
- Correct referencing rather simple and on MSc level expected (read: leads to lower marks if not visible)

# Content Structure

- First question: What is a (seminar) paper about?
  - Answering a question
    - **Conclusion** based on research results (e.g. Hypothesis correct)
  - Convincing someone that your **argument** is valid
    - Evaluation of another paper (Results nice but not applicable...)
  - A **comprehensive** summary/review of a field of research
- What is it not?
  - A mere summary of another research/review paper
  - A piece of **prose** inspired by the topic of the original paper
    - Yes, even if the ideas you write about are good or valid!

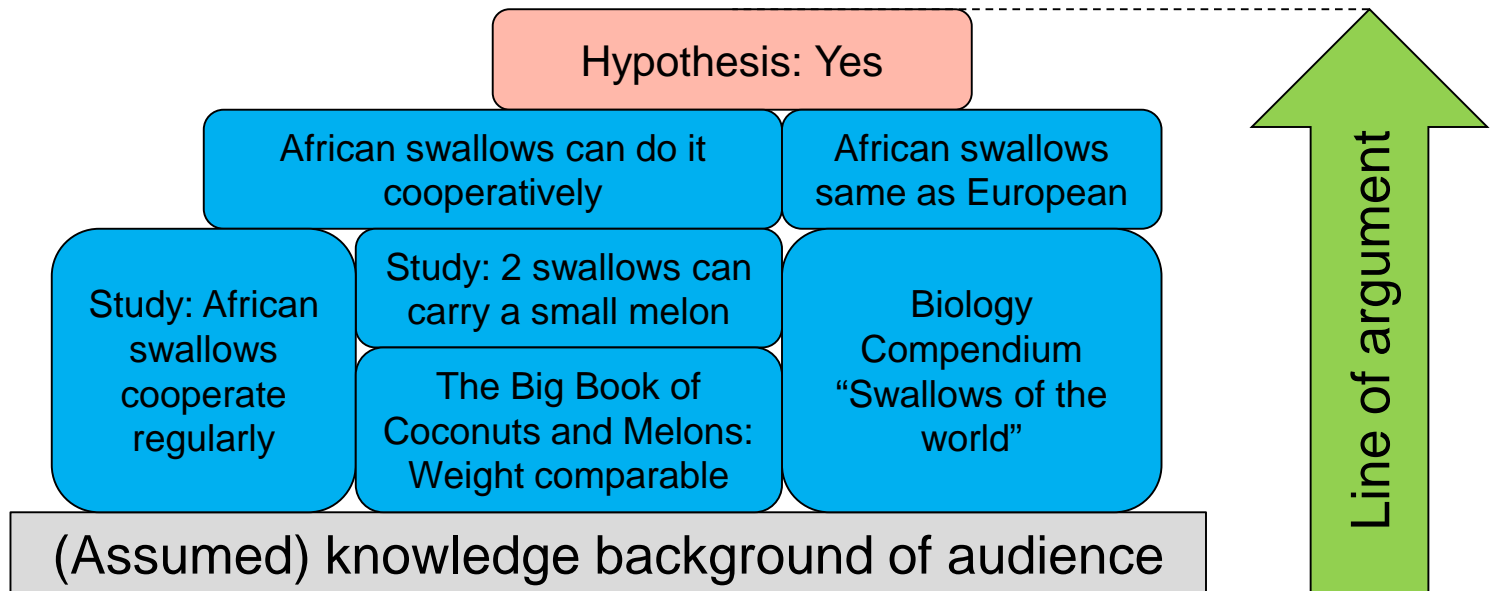
# What is your job?



- Conceptually, you start with the conclusion
- Add brick by brick, aiming for the knowledge of your (assumed) audience

# Example

- Question: Could European swallows carry a coconut?
- Answer: Yes, but only if 2 or 3 cooperate



- Aim: Unbroken line of argument from introduction to end of conclusion

# Referencing



*"If I have seen further it is by standing on ye shoulders of Giants."*

*- Isaac Newton 1642-1727 CE*

- You base your chain of argument on arguments and ideas of others
- Scientific integrity
- Quoting someone else's ideas or arguments without reference: **Plagiarism**
- **How do I recognise a good reference?**
  - Trustworthy, reviewed, easily accessible, unchanging
    - Good: Reviewed articles, books, edited collections, ....
    - Bad: Personal communication, blogs, news articles, [Wikipedia](#)

# Referencing

- Two different things that belong together:

- **Inline citations**

- It was reported (Cleese et al., 1975) that...
- Cleese et al. (1975) have reported...
- It was reported [1] .....
- Cleese et al. (1975, Chapter 4, Verses 16-20) have ...

Tells me which  
one was used!

- **Bibliography entry**

[1] Cleese, J., Chapman, G., Idle, E., Gilliam, T., Jones, T., Palin, M. (1975) "The Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch", in Book of Armaments, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Camelot Press, UK.

Tells me where to find exactly  
the source you have used!

# Examples

## Original Paper (Cleese et al.)

██████ the Lord say, ██████ thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting ██████ Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two, excepting that thou then proceedest to three. ██████ Once the number three, ██████ be reached, then lobbest thou the Holy Hand Grenade in the direction of thine foe, ██████

## Your Paper

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. In order to use it, the Lord said: “thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting. Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two. Two is only allowed in the attempt to reach three and the grenade has to be thrown once three is reached”. The direction should point towards the desired target.

PLAGIARISM

- No reference, paraphrased content → Clear plagiarism



# Examples

## Original Paper (Cleese et al.)

████ the Lord say, █████ thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting █████ Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two, excepting that thou then proceedest to three. █████ Once the number three, █████ be reached, then lobbest thou the Holy Hand Grenade in the direction of thine foe, █████

## Your Paper

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. In order to use it, the Lord said: “thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting. Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two. Two is only allowed in the attempt to reach three and the grenade has to be thrown once three is reached”. The direction should point towards the desired target. [1]

- Plagiarism, because not clear what was referenced here!  
In this case it would only be assigned to last sentence

# Examples

## Original Paper (Cleese et al.)

██████████ the Lord say, ██████████ thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting ██████████ Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two, excepting that thou then proceedeth to three. ██████████ Once the number three, ██████████ be reached, then lobbest thou the Holy Hand Grenade in the direction of thine foe, ██████████

## Your Paper

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. In order to use it, Cleese et al. [1] report that the Lord said “thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting. Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two. Two is only allowed in the attempt to reach three and the grenade has to be thrown once three is reached”. The direction should point towards the desired target.

**WRONG**

- No plagiarism, incorrect referencing, last sentence not clearly assigned to reference

# Examples

## Original Paper (Cleese et al.)

██████████ the Lord say, ██████████ thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting ██████████ Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two, excepting that thou then proceedeth to three. ██████████ Once the number three, ██████████ be reached, then lobbest thou the Holy Hand Grenade in the direction of thine foe, ██████████

## Your Paper

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. In order to use it, Cleese et al. report that the Lord said “thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting. [...] Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two” [1]. They continue to report that two is only allowed in the attempt to reach three and the grenade has to be thrown once three is reached. The direction should point towards the desired target. [1]

- Not plagiarism, correct referencing, just not easy to read now.....

# Examples

## Original Paper (Cleese et al.)

██████ the Lord say, ██████ thou must count to three. Three shall be the number of the counting ██████ Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two, excepting that thou then proceedeth to three. ██████ Once the number three, ██████ be reached, then lobbest thou the Holy Hand Grenade in the direction of thine foe, ██████

## Your Paper

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. In order to use it, Cleese et al. [1] report that the Lord said to count to three, not two or four. Two is only allowed in the attempt to reach three and the grenade has to be thrown once three is reached. The direction should point towards the desired target.

## Or:

One way to kill the Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog is the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch and it was reported that the Lord said to count exactly to three and throw it towards the target [1].

GOOD!

- You mentioned the important content in your own words and told me where you got it from!

# Referencing Summary

- Reader has to be able to clearly **match** citation to corresponding content
- Use direct quotes **very rarely**
  - When the structure of the sentence is important, e.g. Cleese et al. used strange English, like “thou then proceedeth to three.” [1]
- Try to include citations as smoothly into your text as possible to improve **readability**....
- .... while **still** adhering to referencing standards!
  - APA, Harvard Style, ...
- If you are not sure: Ask advisor! You are here to learn it!

# Thank you!

And now go forth and do it correctly..... 😊