

# Good Writing Practice

## Distractions in the introduction section of a journal article

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doi: 10.56012/scgm1052

### Introduction

The Introduction section of a journal article can be distracting when expressing or not expressing the conceptual components. For example, background to the research problem if peripheral rather than pertinent would detract from a focus on the argument. The Research problem would be distracting by dogmatically stating an absence of a published article. Another distraction would be the omission of a hypothesis, which was undoubtedly centerfold in the grant supporting the research. Lastly, not including the objective and the experimental approach would eliminate the segue to the methods section.

Verb tense is an important component of writing with clarity and focus.

### 1. Present tense

*Protein A is larger than protein B (Smith, 1990)*

Use of the present tense is thematically focused and accepted by the current author and/or the discipline as being valid; a timeless truth.

### 2. Past + present tense (hybrid)

#### Example 1

*Smith (1990) confirmed that protein A is larger than protein B.*

This example has the same meaning as in Point 1 but the emphasis is on the previous investigator; the current author and discipline accept the statement.

#### Example 2

*Smith reported (Ref.) that protein A is larger than protein B.*



*It was reported by Smith (Ref.) that protein A is larger than protein B.*

*According to Smith (Ref.) protein A is larger than protein B.*

In these examples, the statements are solely the responsibility of the previous investigator.

### 3. Past + past tense

*Smith reported (Ref.) that protein A was larger than protein B.*

Acceptance of the statement is solely the responsibility of the previous investigator. This example is essentially the same as the past + present tense (hybrid) examples but the inference is that the current investigator is less accepting of the statement.

### 4. Present perfect + present tense (hybrid)

*Smith has reported (Smith, 1960) that protein A is larger than protein B.*

The inference in this format is that the current author and/or the discipline accept the statement. An effort to convey “recently” is grammatically incorrect because the time is fixed to the past (e.g., 1960).

### Conclusion

The Introduction section of a journal article should be focussed and relevant. The tense in which the text is written can make a subtle difference to the meaning.

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