

Writing *a journal article* effectively

SADaCC
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Learning Outcomes

- Understand how to select a target journal
- Understand that feedback is part of the writing process
- Understand what an argument is and how to argue in academia
- Revisit how to read your source materials effectively & plan your assignments/tasks
- Revisit the function and ways to integrate these source materials

**“the act of imparting or exchanging information”
“clarifies your thoughts and writing in your own words”**



“Academic writing is an act of communication and creation, based on an established set of conventions, involving a plurality of actors (course convenor, colleagues, examiners, and other scholars), and aimed at conveying a core message to an audience of ([health sciences]) scholars and practitioners, activists.”

Patriotta, G., 2017. Crafting papers for publication: Novelty and convention in academic writing. Journal of Management Studies 54:5, 747-759.

Academic Writing Conventions

Analytical & organized – planning involved with an outline to formulate your thoughts

Tone is formal/professional - no slang, clichés, jargon

Concise & precise – be explicit in your meaning, avoid contractions

Approach – deductive reasoning, stance (educate, facts = reference)

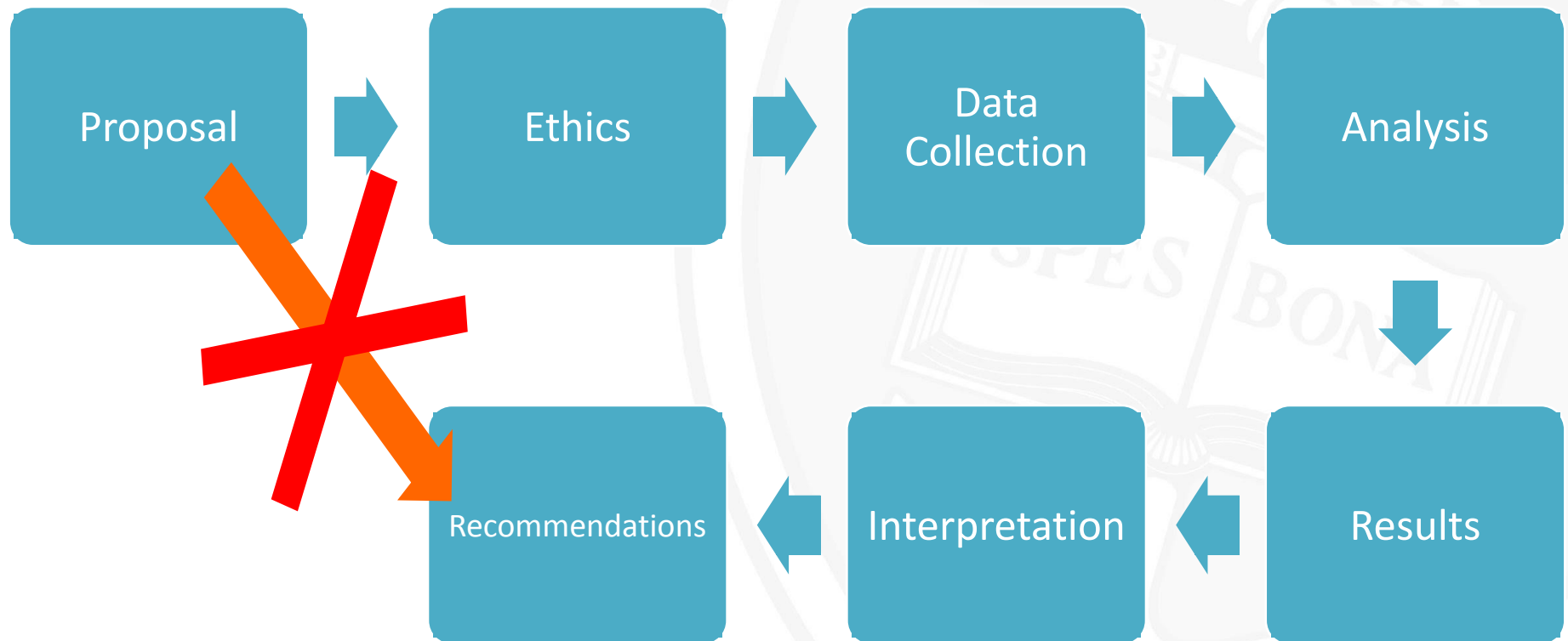
Objective – write in the third person (disciplinary), passive voice

Language – discipline specific and chosen with precision

Genre* – structure depends on genre

Genre* = a text that is situated within a social context (Clark, 2008)

the research process



the research process

Research Proposal/Protocol

Initial literature review
Draft methods
Draft ethics application



Ethics Application

Refined literature review
Revised rationale
Draft ethics section



Data Collection

Write draft methods section:
recruitment/sampling strategy and process
Discussion of limitations and mitigations



Analysis

Further develop draft methods section:
Explanation of process, approach, tools, settings, parameters etc...



Results

write draft Results section
Develop visual representations (schematics, figures etc...)



Interpretation

write draft discussion section
Further develop discussion of limitations and mitigations



Recommendations

write draft conclusion



Purpose of a Journal Article

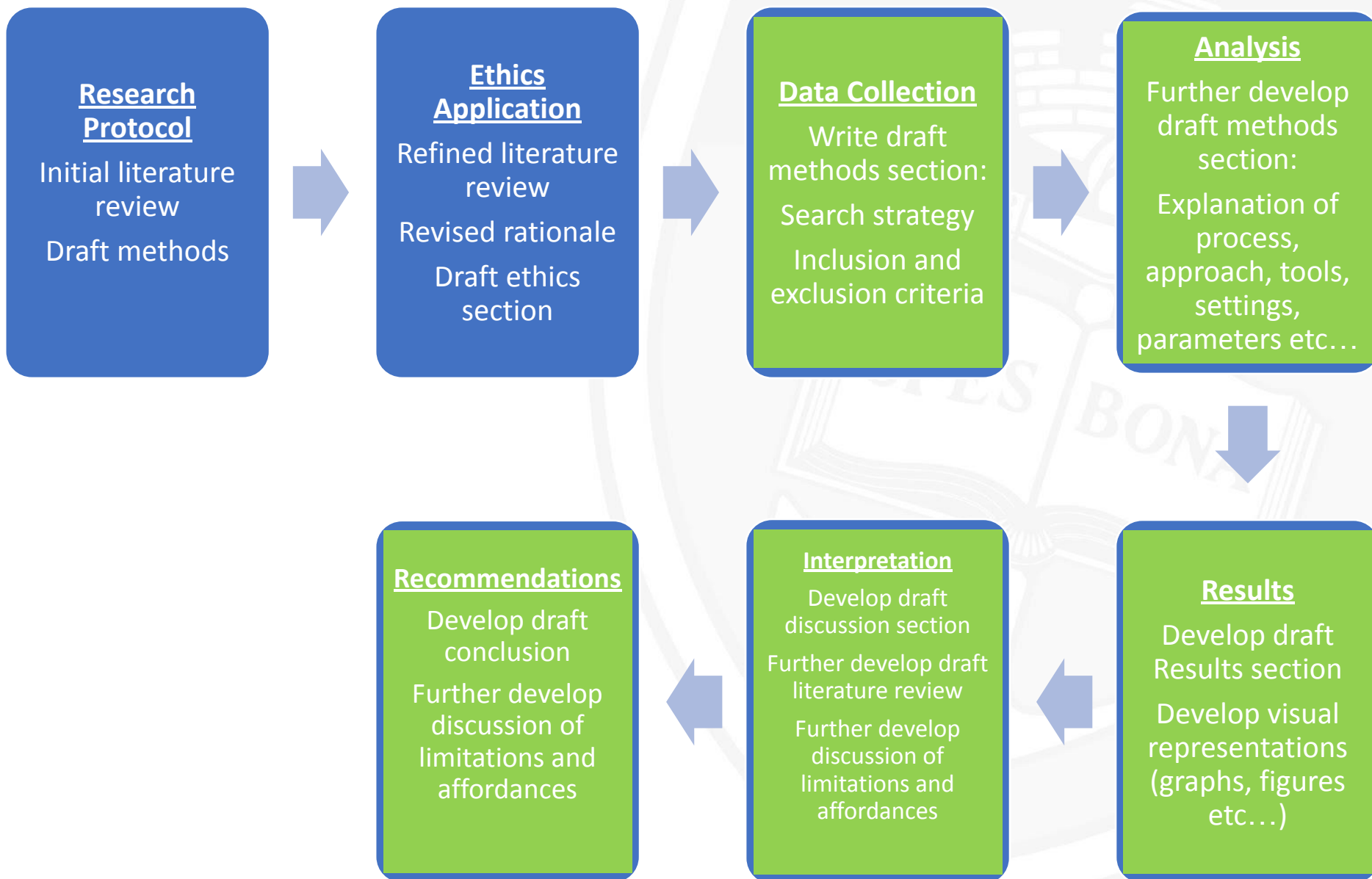
- Communicate new scientific findings.
- Share new facts, truths and explanations.
- “Publish or Perish”



“Research is only half the work; the other half is **writing and publishing**. Your research is incomplete until you publish your data.”

(Patience *et al.*, 2015)

the research writing process



Select Target Journals

- How one puts together a manuscript is **directly** related to the selection of the target journal.
- Need to **comply** with the writing rules of the target journal
- **Word count** is a major limiting factor
- Check: Are you making some kind of novel contribution to the literature?
- The **suitability** of your focus/argument/findings to the agenda of the target journal should be investigated beforehand
- **Noncompliance** with instructions to authors increases the likelihood of rejection
- Review **previous** journal articles in the target journal [article length, style of writing, citation format]

Argumentation

There is a difference between the **common-sense** understanding of an **argument** and its scholarly interpretation.

Argument means **more than simple contradiction and disagreement.**

An argument “is a connected series of statements intended to establish a position/point of view”

The **function** of an argument is to **convince others** to reconsider their position, in agreement with you.

Scholarly argument **does not take evidence as a given**; therefore, incorporates analysis, interpretation and evaluation

Rather than a disagreeable exchange, it is an **intellectual process.**

E.g Artificial intelligence will revolutionise healthcare
Have to convince the reader using facts - build a rationale

A strong academic argument requires:

1. An **objective critique** of alternative positions
2. **Convincing evidence** for your position
3. **Persuasive force**
 - a. Source integration
 - b. Hedging & boosting



the writing process



Overarching Questions:

Why am I writing this? (What's your **purpose**?)

For whom am I writing this? (Who is your **audience**?)



THINK!

Focus on ideas

some tools:

- brainstorming
- gathering info
- making an idea web
- free writing
- using a graphic organizer
- creating an outline

Cycle of writing, getting feedback & rewriting

- clarify main ideas
- support with details & examples
- make it **flow**
 - organization
 - sentence structure
- use great language

Correct the writing

- spelling
- grammar
- punctuation
- capitalization

Format the writing

- finished product

"non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983, p. 165).

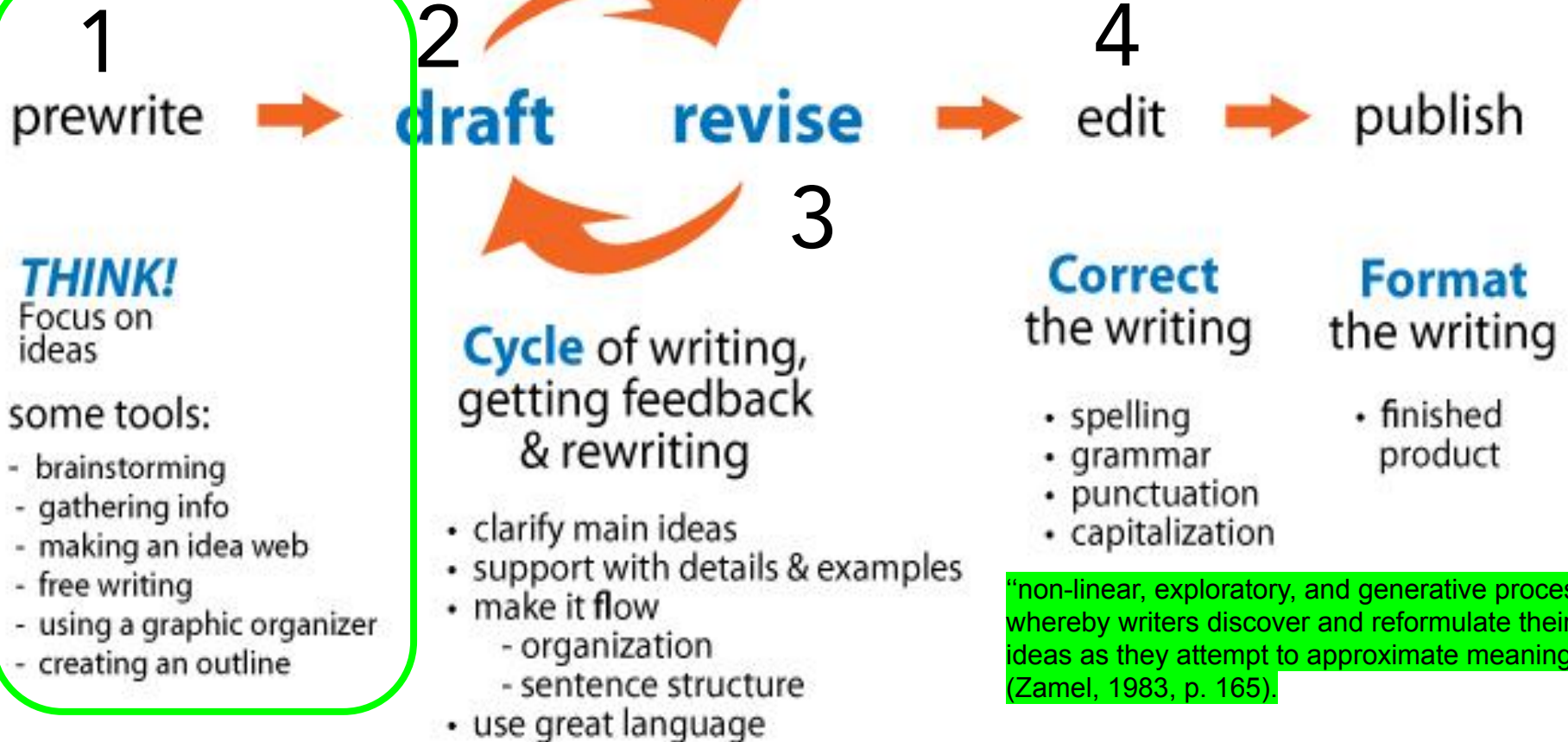
the writing process



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Free Writing

Process of generating a lot of information by writing non-stop.



- Put pen to paper for a minimum of 10 minutes.
- The only rule is you have to keep writing.
- Eventually you'll come up with something!
- Whether or not it's a "winner" doesn't matter, because at least you're energizing the part of your mind that does the work of writing.

Critical Reading

Remember, a strong argument relies on a **critical assessment** of the literature, not only a SUMMARY

Critical reading will **DRIVE** critical writing

Note:

- It is not about thinking negatively or about finding fault
- It is about **analysing the information**, putting it into **context** and using it to **build an argument** for your research objectively
- Critique in order to **redesign, remodel**, and make **better**
- Make **notes, annotate** and ask **questions**

Reading Thematically

- The focus of your text/article will tell you about the topics (themes) you need to read about.
- As you search and gather literature/information, group the readings according to these themes
- You may use the same reading to gather information about more than one theme, BUT
- **Read about one topic at a time** – in other words, **read thematically and actively**



Critical Questioning: read actively

Contrast

Cite

Critique

Connect

Compare

- What is the author's central point, main argument, conclusion, thesis, contention, or question?
- What findings and conclusions are presented?
- What evidence is used to support the conclusions?
- Is the evidence relevant? What methodology has the author used?
- What are the strengths, limitations and implications of this study?
- Does the author make any assumptions?
- What is not being said?
- Is there any explicit or hidden bias?
- How does this link with other texts that you have read?
- How does this text add to your knowledge/relevant for your essay/project?

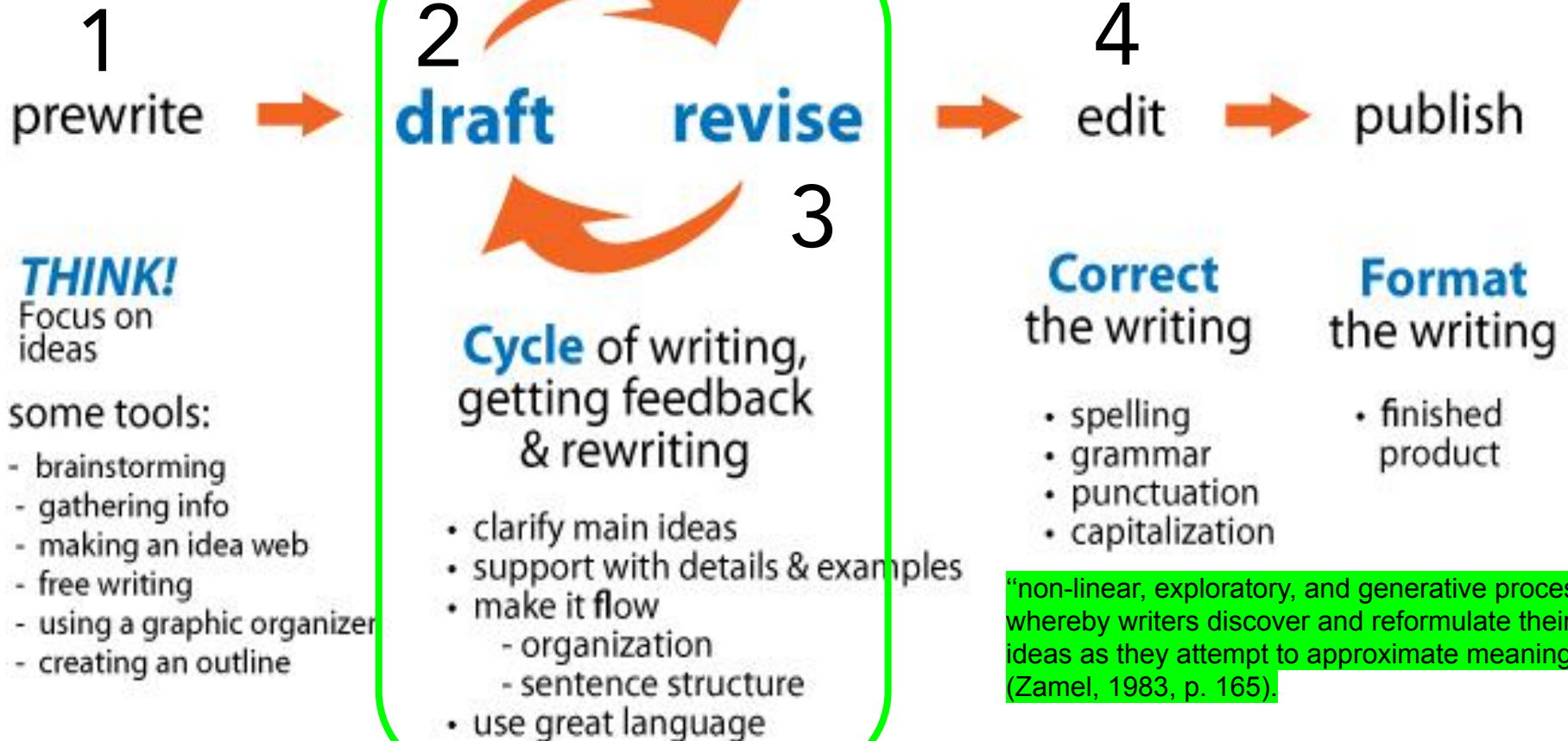
the writing process



Overarching Questions:

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Text Structure

Introduction

Contextualisation
Thesis Statement
Roadmap

Body Paragraphs

Topic sentence
Supporting sentences (Evidence/Explanation/Theory)
Link theory to examples
Analysis (so, what?)
Linking sentence

Body Paragraphs

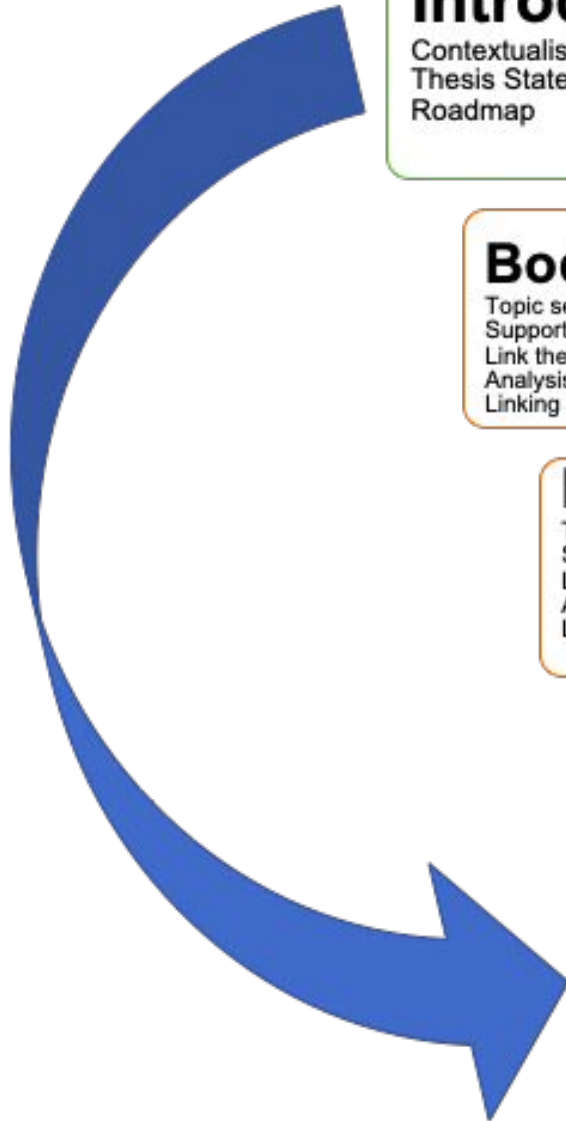
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Body Paragraphs

Topic sentence
Supporting sentences (Evidence/Explanation/Theory)
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Analysis (so, what?)
Linking sentence

Conclusion

Synthesise the main points
Significance and implications
Look Forward



Introduction

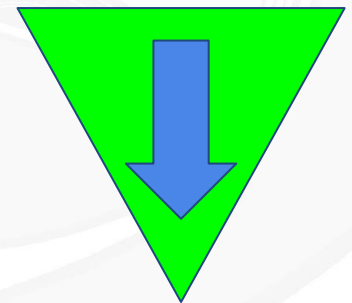
The overview of the **textual journey** that you and your reader are about to embark on.

They:

- Orient your reader to the topic
- Demonstrate how well-organized your piece is
- Grab the reader's attention

A good introduction would enable the reader to answer the following questions:

1. What is the **general context** of this essay?
2. What is the **specific focus** of this essay?
3. What are the **main points** to be covered?
4. How will the **question** be answered?
5. What is the **author's** position? (if needed)



Paragraph Structure

“A collection of **related** sentences dealing with a **single** topic or developing a single idea.”

#1 rule = 1 topic per paragraph

- Each sentence is supporting evidence and must be related to the overall topic of that paragraph
- If the single points get too long, elaborate on them in their own paragraphs
- Requires careful decision making about what constitutes “a topic”

Paragraph Structure

Topic Sentence

A statement is made

Supporting Details

The statement is explained using
theory/examples/
discussion/analysis

Linking Sentence

Mental transition to the next
statement



Conclusions

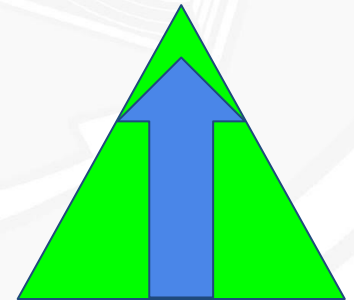
Signify the **end of a textual journey**; bringing the reader full circle so as to provide unity.

They:

- Answer the question “so what?”
- Synthesize your **main points (Look back)**
- Give your reader something to think about (**Look forward**)

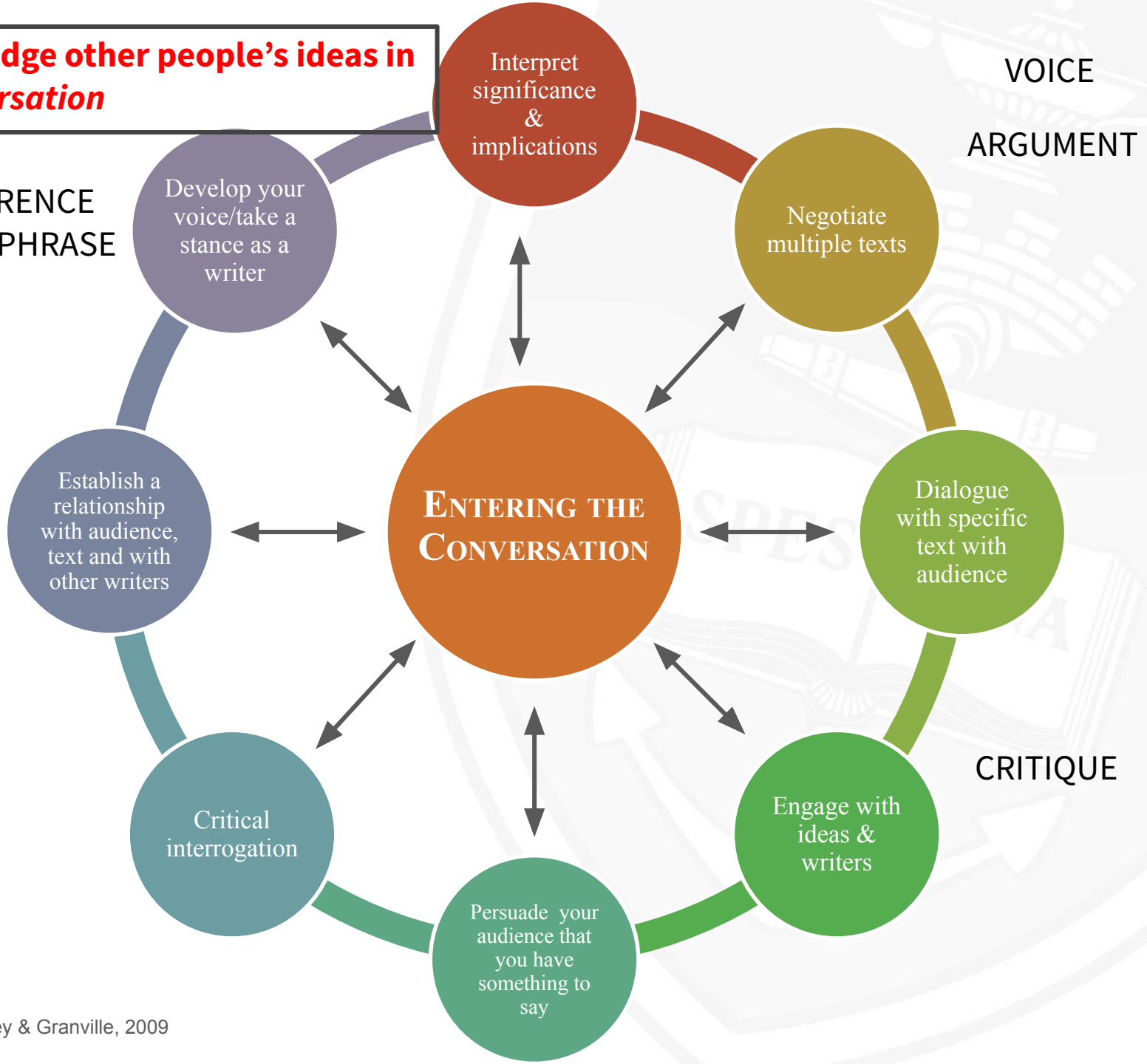
A good conclusion would enable the reader to answer the following questions:

- What was the **focus** of this essay?
- What were the **main points** covered?
- What is/was the **importance** of this topic?
- **Where to from here?**



Acknowledge other people's ideas in the conversation

- REFERENCE
- PARAPHRASE



Integrating Sources

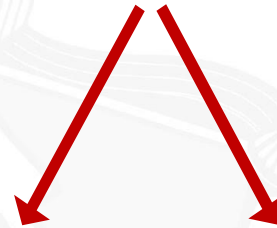


Referencing styles and conventions

Harvard
APA

In-text referencing vs. reference lists

Quote or Paraphrase



Foreground

Background

Why paraphrase?

Paraphrasing is a valuable rhetorical tool for knowledge transforming purposes.

Paraphrasing does ***not help* writers to avoid plagiarism, but makes one a critical writer.**

Integrating sources

- ▣ **PARAPHRASE** – put a short passage into your own words, sentence structure and style without changing the author's original meaning
 - *Demonstrates your **understanding***
 - *Allows you to **relate** their ideas to your own work*
 - *Allows you to infer **critique***
 - *Makes **your academic voice** heard*

Academic voice is the writer's sense of self and how you wish to be portrayed or represent yourself.

Think of it as your writer identity.

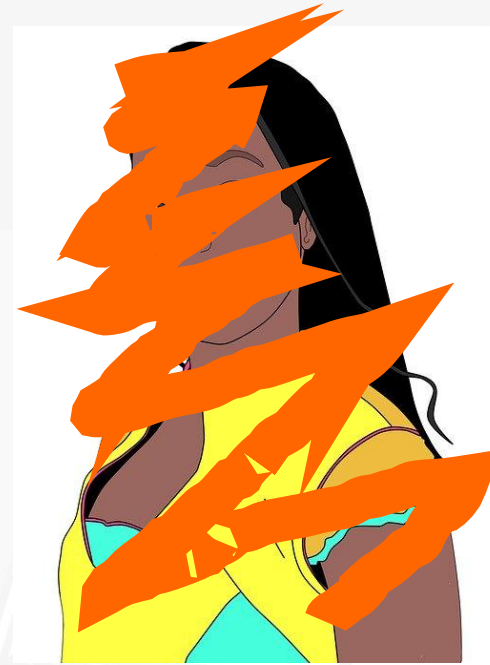
Why? **Think critically and write critically**

Foregrounding vs Backgrounding



Foregrounding

One way to address system-blocking mechanisms **according** to Apell & Eriksson, (2021), is to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration².



Backgrounding

Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration is **believed to** shape system-blocking mechanisms².



Foregrounding vs Backgrounding



Foregrounding

Apell & Eriksson (2021) **assert** that interdisciplinary collaboration is the main approach to system-blocking mechanisms².



Backgrounding

Interdisciplinary collaboration **dramatically** addresses system-blocking mechanisms².



Your stance: intellectual attitude

Neutral	Tentative	Strong (in favour)	Strong (against)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to show• to demonstrate• to investigate• to explore• to state• to report• to list• to describe• to outline• to note• to comment• to express• to remark• to declare• to inform• to discuss• to define• to mention• to address• to present• to reveal• to find• to view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to suggest• to propose• to advise• to recommend• to speculate• to hypothesise• to reason• to imply• to postulate• to question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to assert• to advocate• to encourage• to argue• to affirm• to believe• to appraise• to conclude• to stress• to emphasise• to accentuate• to urge• to insist• to claim• to convince• to satisfy• to confirm• to support the view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to challenge• to dispute• to disagree• to refute• to negate• to object• to contradict• to dismiss• to caution• to doubt• to oppose

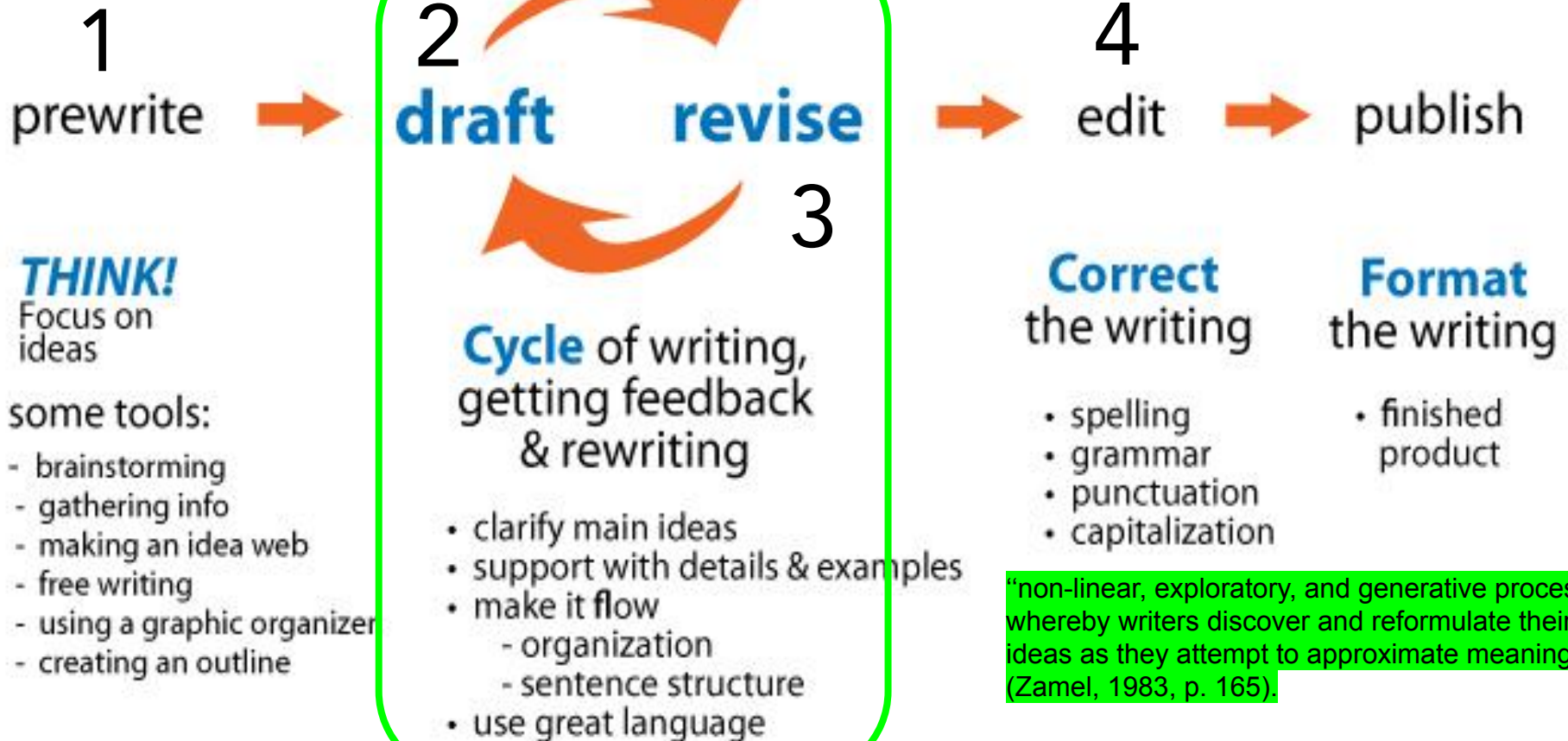
the writing process



Overarching Questions:

Why am I writing this? (What's your **purpose**?)

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Four C's of Academic Writing

Content

Relevance to topic; argument; awareness of supportive literature/theories etc

Coherence

Logical flow of ideas

Cohesion

Linking of ideas to create a dynamic narrative

Clarity

Formal language, good grammar and punctuation, concise and precise writing



edit → publish

Correct
the writing

- spelling
- grammar
- punctuation
- capitalization

Format
the writing



Challenge 1: Finding the time

Long alienation periods are **problematic** because of the need for recurrent literature and data reviews

Option 1:

- Allocate at least 30 minutes a day = 3.5 hours a week
- Completion within a few weeks/months
- Advantages: makes a **habit** of writing, sustained motivation
- Disadvantage: daily responsibilities might intervene, prolonged process

Option 2:

- Dedicate **larger chunks** of time (i.e. two full evenings a week and half Saturday)
- Target is more rapidly attained
- Advantages: a more realistic and **productive** writing habit, “just do it”

Find a strategy and process that works best for YOU

Challenge 2: Poor planning

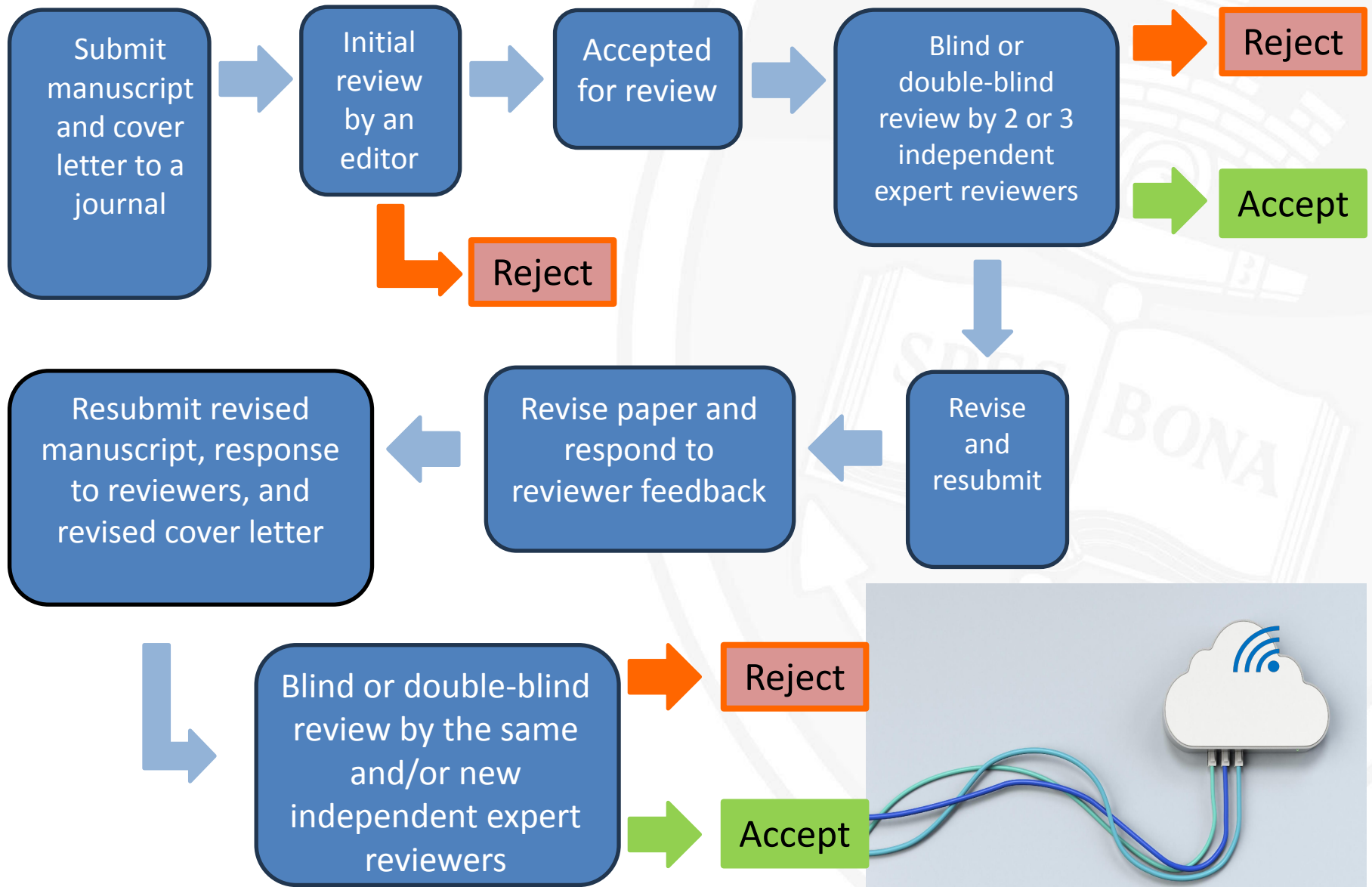
- Important to **plan** your paper “in theory” before you begin writing
- Set aside 1-2 hours of **uninterrupted** time in an environment, no distractions
- Plan the draft [**research story**, outline, key arguments]
- Start writing **before** data collection is complete (intro, methods, results tables)
- Allows you to see the missing/weak aspects of the study and solve relevant problems



Writing as a team:

- Task sharing and **allocation** [Google docs, Team Drives]
- Achievement of the **shared duties** within a predetermined time frame will sustain the motivation of the researchers.
- The primary author should be the “**chief**” and periodically organise meetings

the research process



the writing process



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Cycle of writing,
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& rewriting

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Correct
the writing

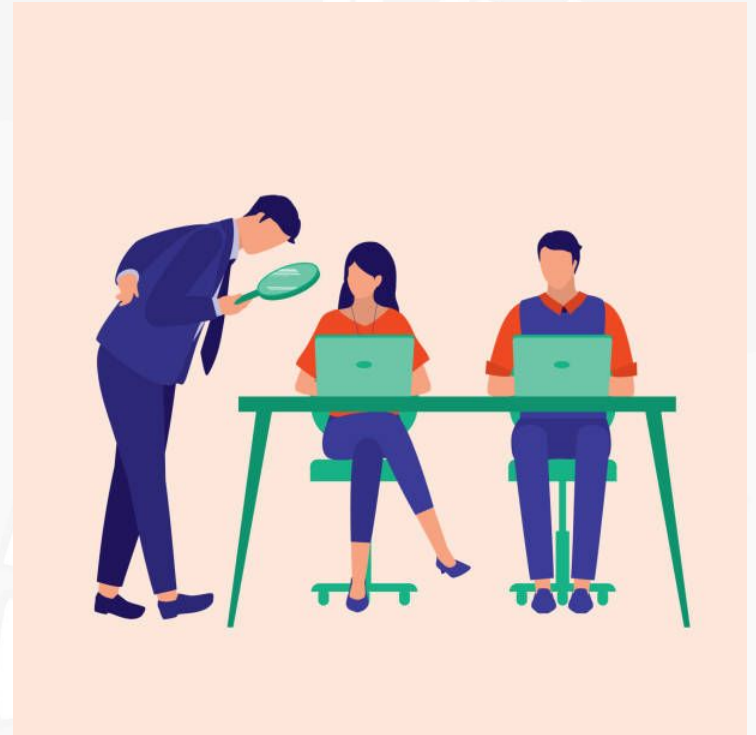
- spelling
- grammar
- punctuation
- capitalization

Format
the writing

- finished product

Peer Review

- Peer review literally means the **review and evaluation** of your work by your peers or colleagues.
- Research does not 'exist' until you have published it, and nothing (should be) published without peer-review.
- Peer review forms the foundation of academic and scientific practice.
- Beyond formal 'peer-review' processes, the principals of seeking and working with feedback should form part of our approach to writing.



The Value of Peer Review & Feedback

- Feedback enables **development**
 - Feedback will highlight areas where you need to focus on developing your knowledge or skills
- Feedback supports **knowledge production**
 - Critical questions and innovative suggestions may help to move your thinking or work forward
- Feedback provides a **safety-net**
 - Feedback may help you to address mistakes or gaps in your work before it's formally evaluated
- Feedback enables a **collective approach**
 - None of us can do this all alone – we need to work together

Why we resist Feedback & Peer Review

- We don't value feedback and review as *part* of the process
 - By the time we are ready to share it, we generally think of the work as 'finished', so revisions feel like a frustrating irritation that forces us to return to something we thought was done.
 - But, if we look forward to receiving feedback that makes our work stronger, we might engage with the process more appreciatively.
- Negative feedback can be uncomfortable or painful to accept
 - We may feel our pride has been wounded because our best efforts have been criticised.
 - But we need to be open to constructive criticism because academic work is not a solo activity and none of us can know all things.
 - We need to appreciate our disciplinary communities as a resource and view feedback as supporting our work.
- The feedback we receive may not be constructive
 - We can't control the nature of the feedback we receive
 - But we can actively seek out constructive feedback
 - And we can control the nature of the feedback we give; we can model good practice

Constructive Feedback

- To 'construct' means to 'build'; constructive feedback must be helpful
- Constructive feedback can be positive or negative

Feedback example	Positive feedback	Negative feedback	Constructive (helpful) feedback	Unhelpful feedback
1				
2				
3				
4				

Making Feedback Part of your Process

- Approach feedback intentionally, as part of your development
- Actively seek opportunities to give and receive feedback
- Work with ‘critical friends’
- Purposefully plan time for feedback and further revisions
- Engage constructively with people who provide you with unhelpful feedback
- Offer constructive feedback to others



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