

Preparation for a writing session or Shut Up and Write

Go to the stage of the writing process you are in and identify your next tiny step

1. You have just started your research project

Tiny steps	AI as critical reader
• Fill in the question tool for the Introduction. • Write a first rough draft of the Introduction.	Give AI your draft and ask: <i>"Are background, problem, relevance and gap of knowledge clear?"</i> and <i>"Any missing steps?"</i> <i>"Any additional reader's questions?"</i>
• Make a shortlist of the 'what we already know' items for the Introduction.	Share your shortlist and your research question, and ask: <i>"Which of these items are essential to make the gap visible, and which could go?"</i>
• Find similar papers in your field to study the layout of the Methods section, and select the best one to serve as a template. • Make a first outline for your Methods in blocks with headings and topics. Then work out each block in more detail: list what you did, with which materials, and how, in the order a reader needs to reproduce your work.	Give AI your outline and ask it to act as a researcher who wants to replicate your study: <i>"Which information would you miss to repeat this experiment?"</i>
• Freewrite about your results: What do you expect? Why? What are the specific questions in your project? What will be the contribution of this project? Who will benefit?	Freewrite first, then let AI interview you: <i>"Ask me five critical questions about the expected contribution of my project, one at a time."</i> Answer in your own words and save as input for your Introduction and Discussion.

2. You are in the process of gathering your data

Tiny steps	AI as critical reader
• Any of the above. • Describe possible limitations that are emerging in your project (in your freewriting document).	Let AI play devil's advocate: <i>"Here is my study design. Which limitations would a critical reviewer raise?"</i> Decide for yourself which ones are real and how you will address them.
• Describe unexpected developments in the process: did you change your plan or adjust the research question? • Revisit your Introduction.	
• Compose a working title that describes the result of the study.	Test your title: <i>"Based on this title alone, what do you expect this paper to show?"</i> Does the answer match your main finding?

3. All the data is there

Tiny steps	AI as critical reader
- Any of the above. - For the Results section: always start with the tables and figures. First, list the key messages that rise from your results: what does your data tell you? Then, for each key message, find the figure or table that depicts it best. Put them in a logical order, and only then write the text around them.	List your figures and tables in order, each with its key message, and ask: <i>"What red thread do you see? Where does the sequence break or does a step seem missing?"</i>
- Fill out the Question Tool for the Discussion. - For each question in the Question Tool: make a list of possible subquestions to address for each move. - Create a shortlist of critical reader's questions related to your results.	This is where AI shines as a critical reader: <i>"You are a skeptical reviewer for [target journal]. Here are my main findings. List the ten questions you would ask the authors."</i> Compare its list with yours and select the questions your Discussion must answer.
- Write a first sketch of the opening and closing paragraph of the Discussion. These two paragraphs will be connected. Check similar articles to see how others did that. - List the key messages your Discussion should encompass. - Compose a storyline for your Discussion that is in line with the red thread in the Results.	Share your key messages and your Results storyline, and ask: <i>"Does the order of my Discussion follow the order of my Results? Which key message is not supported by a result, and which result has no key message?"</i>
Check your target journal for the required templates (instructions to authors).	

4. A first rough draft of any section is there

Tiny steps	AI as critical reader
Check cohesion, style, and grammar (the items below are part of the course's content): - the use of key words and the four tools of cohesion - sentence length (variety and location) - connectedness of paragraphs: quality of topic sentences - location of key sentences - opening phrases of your sentences - the (over)use of noun style: search for opportunities to add concrete verbs and nouns - the use of the passive voice - concision - the use of verb tenses - grammar pitfalls	Use AI as a diagnostic tool and make the changes yourself. For example: <i>"List the first sentence of each paragraph. Can a reader follow the story from these sentences alone?", "Mark all sentences longer than 30 words", or "Find the nominalizations in this paragraph, but do not replace them."</i> Be critical of AI style suggestions: they tend to add boosters, flatten your voice, and remove careful hedging.

A simple test: can you explain and defend every sentence in your text without the AI conversation open? Then it is truly your text.