

## How to Write a Background

This section should put your research into context and consist of a succinct **3-4 paragraph (~400 words or ~10-15%** of manuscript text) narrative that sets the stage for the study, justifies its importance, and frames the specific issue addressed or hypotheses tested. Keep the narrative focused on only information pertinent to the study and avoid writing a detailed literature review or providing specifics about your research. **Think of this section as a funnel – start broad by describing the big picture and narrow down to the specific research objectives** one paragraph at a time using the following format:

- **First Paragraph** should discuss the problem or issue and **explain its significance**, particularly in terms of prevalence, incidence, cost, quality of life, and/or mortality. Essentially, this paragraph should convince readers why this is an important issue and succinctly explain the potential for broad impact.
  - There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of ...
  - In the history of Xs, X has been thought of as a key factor in ...
  - Xs are one of the most widely used groups of Y and have been extensively used for ....
  - X is of interest because ... However, X could be a contributing factor to ...
  - A number of cross-sectional studies suggest an association between X and Y...
  - Previous studies of X have not dealt with ... / There is little published data on ...
  - This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of X that exist among ...
  - This paper analyses the impact of ...
  - The specific objective of this study was to ...
- **Second and Third Paragraphs** should **summarize results of previous studies** on the topic and highlight areas of disagreement or uncertainty. Be sure to focus specifically on unresolved issues or controversies related to the specific questions that will be investigated in your manuscript. These paragraphs should concisely outline what is known and, more importantly, what is still unknown. A **“gap” in knowledge** that your study seeks to narrow or fill should be clearly identified.
  - The existing literature on X is extensive and focuses particularly on ...
  - It is only since the work of Smith (2001) that the study of X has gained momentum.
  - Several lines of evidence suggest that ...
  - In an analysis of X, Smith *et al.* (2012) found ... Unlike Smith, Jones (2013) argues that ...
  - Some writers (e.g. Smith, 2002) have attempted to draw fine distinctions between ...
  - Taken together, these studies support the notion that ...
- **Final Paragraph** should provide a clear description of **what your study specifically investigated** and why. It should conclude with 1-2 sentences stating the study's purpose and describe the primary and secondary objectives. The purpose and objectives should be identical to those in the Abstract.
  - The main issues addressed in this paper are: a), b) and c).
  - There are two primary aims of this study: 1. To investigate ... 2. To ascertain ...
  - Characterization of X is important for our increased understanding of ...
  - The importance and originality of this study are that it explores ...