

QGWHSS Episode 1: Reading an IMRD article

- N: Hi and welcome! The purpose of this video series is to help you meet the challenges of academic writing. In this series, we'll see how to write one common academic text, which is used to report research. It's called IMRD, and that stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. But in order to be a good academic writer, you also have to be a good academic reader. This episode will help you with that. By the end of this episode you will be able to: explain what an IMRD article is; describe the sections in an IMRD article; and be an active reader by looking for certain information in each section. In this episode we'll look at examples from this article.
- V: "Words for what? Contrasting university students' receptive and productive academic vocabulary needs"
- N: The purpose of this article is to understand the range of academic vocabulary which students need for success at university. Receptive means being able to understand words when reading or listening. Productive means being able to use words when speaking or writing. Now this may sound complicated, but even if you don't know much about the topic, you can understand the article if you use the right strategies. An article like this has a number of parts: a title; an abstract, or summary; the names of the authors; and a reference list. Our focus today is on the four main sections: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion. So, let's get started with the introduction. The introduction tells readers the things they need to know to make sense of the article. To do this, writers identify the topic; explain why it's important; and state the purpose of the study. This article tells us what the broad topic is right at the beginning.
- V: "Vocabulary is well established as an important topic within English for Academic Purposes (EAP)."
- N: And why is this an important topic? The introduction gives several reasons. Here's one.
- V: "However, research suggests that significant numbers of students, particularly students whose first language is not English, are challenged by academic discourse(s) because of insufficient vocabulary knowledge."
- N: So, students with limited vocabularies may find it difficult to do academic tasks. At the end of the introduction, we learn the specific objectives of this study:
- V: "The present study is guided by the objectives of: determining what academic vocabulary students use productively; and exploring the relationship between receptive and productive academic vocabulary."
- N: In other words, the researchers are asking how many academic words students know how to use in speaking and writing, and how that compares to the words they can understand when reading or listening.

- N: The introduction is followed by the “methods” section, which tells us what the researchers did.
- V: “Achieving the objectives outlined above entailed inventorying the academic vocabulary of writing produced by students in order to compare the result with the academic vocabulary found in published academic writing.”
- N: The study reported in this article compared the vocabulary university students use when they write with the vocabulary they need to be able to read. In the “results” section, we find out what the researchers learned.
- V: “The resulting list of productive academic vocabulary (PAVL) contained 591 words, considerably fewer than the 3,015 in the AVL.”
- N: Remember that the study compared students' productive and receptive vocabularies? The productive vocabulary was much smaller. The final section of an IMRD article, the discussion, puts things in context, telling us what the results mean. For example, should students try to learn different words for different purposes?
- V: “This study establishes that students writing at university need one academic vocabulary. . . whereas a slightly different academic vocabulary is required when students engage receptively with written academic texts.”
- N: So we've seen that IMRD texts have different kinds of information in different places. Reading an IMRD article will be easier if you look for answers to specific questions in each section. Read the introduction with these questions in mind: What is the research topic? Why is it important? What questions will the study answer? When reading the methods, ask yourself: What did the researchers do? How did that help them answer their research questions? The results section tells you: What were the answers to the research questions? And when you get to the discussion section, you can ask: What do those answers mean? If you ask these questions when you're reading an IMRD article, you'll be able to read it more easily, understand it better, and use it in your own work more effectively. In the next four episodes, we'll look at how to write an IMRD paper, section by section. So, see you in the next episode.