

QGWS 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: "Epidemiology of race-day distal limb fracture in flat racing Thoroughbreds in Great Britain"
- N: This article investigated a common problem in Thoroughbreds, or racehorses. The distal limb is the lower part of a horse's leg, and fractures can happen because of the weight of horses' bodies and the high speeds at which they run. 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 in the first sentence that its topic is distal limb fractures in racehorses.
- V: "Fracture is one of the most common types of race-day injuries in Thoroughbred racehorses, and the majority of fractures occur in the distal limb."
- N: And why is this important? The introduction gives us several reasons. Here are a couple.
- V: "Furthermore, fractures have a financial impact on trainers and owners and detract from the public perception of the sport."
- N: So, fractures cost money, and may cause the public to have a negative attitude to racing. At the end of the introduction, we learn the specific objectives of this study.
- V: "Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to identify current horse-, race-, course-, trainer- and jockey-level risk factors for race-day distal limb fractures in flat racing Thoroughbreds in Great Britain."
- N: In other words, are fractures like this more likely to happen to certain kinds of horses? Or does it make a difference what sort of race they're running, on what kind of track, or who the trainer and jockey are? The introduction is followed by the "methods" section, which tells us what the researchers did.
- V: "A retrospective cohort study was conducted using all Thoroughbred flat racing starts in Great Britain between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2013."
- N: In other words, the researchers looked back at the records of all races in Great Britain during a thirteen-year period. In the "results" section, we find out what the researchers

learned. So is it true that some horses are more likely to have a distal limb fracture? The article tells us “yes”.

V: “Generally, older horses were at higher odds of distal limb fracture although an increasing number of previous starts decreased the odds of distal limb fracture”

N: The final section of an IMRD article, the discussion, puts things in context, telling us what the results mean. For example, why are older racehorses more likely to get these fractures?

V: “The higher fracture risk in older horses may. . . partly be due to an age-related change in the bone’s adaptive ability, leading to failure.”

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.