Winning the Publishing Game: Welcome to Day 1!

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International Editor, The BMJ

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former Executive Editor, The Lancet

former Executive Editor icddr,b, Bangladesh

former Senior Editor, PLOS Medicine

Want to publish in high impact medical journals?

- Professional journal editor for 22 years
- 100s of publications, 100s of rejections
- I offer a unique & evidence-based approach to writing for publication
- I teach writing in my personal capacity

Our programme

Today 11.00 – 18.00

Lunch at 13.00 Tea at 16.00

Understand the game and the players

Make a plan for your paper

Take a 4-Step Process

Tomorrow 9.00 – 16.30

Tea at 11.00 Lunch at 13.00

Continue to draft your paper

Publication ethics

Writing editorials

Commit to your plan

My goal.
At the end of the workshop:

You will have a draft paper

You will have a target journal, a deadline, and a plan for finalising and submitting your paper

You will have new knowledge of the publishing process and how to realise your writing and publication goals

1 INTRODUCTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Why Publish?

- To disseminate new knowledge
- To change practice or policy

- Papers are a measure of research output
- Publication are central to promotion, tenure, merit, career advancement

- It’s your job, it’s your responsibility

Why not?

Barriers to writing:

- Takes time
- Hard to get started
- It’s miserable
- Why should the world care about what I have to say?
- Nothing to say
- Where could I publish?
- What I write might be harshly criticised

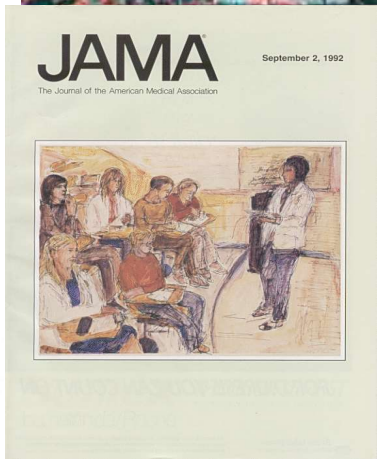
Competition in journals is fierce

- 900,000 new citations in Medline each year: 17,000 per week
- Rejection rates:
  - Physical sciences 25%
  - Humanities 70%
  - *General medical journals* 90-95%
- Far more volume of submissions than available space in journals
- Much that is rejected is worthy research

Why the big medical journals?

- Among the most influential media in the world
- *Have impact* – discourses, agendas, policies, practices, reputations

- Mix of science and opinion
- ‘Magazine’
- Exist in a competitive market
- Edited by professional editors

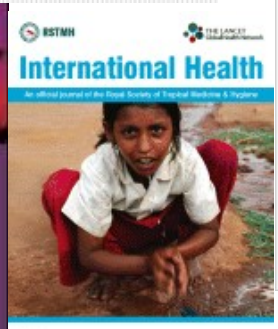


PLOS | MEDICINE

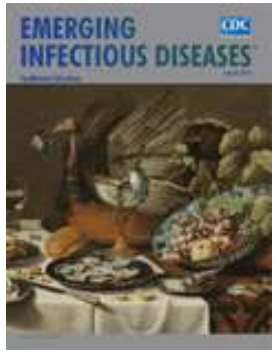
BMJ
Health in Africa
The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE
Global Health
Addressing the Challenges to World Health
Globalization, Climate Change, and Human Health
Governance Challenges in Global Health
Antifungal Therapy for Cryptococcal Meningitis
Go Big and Go Fast — Vaccine Refusal and Disease Eradication
Ensuring Public Health Neutrality
Security of Health Care and Global Health
PLOS | MEDICINE
THE LANCET
Migration: "Why are these collective inhumanities taking place? How have our liberal democracies failed? What are the reasons?"
JAMA
Global Health

The Rise of Global Health

THE LANCET Global Health



GLOBALIZATION AND HEALTH



EXERCISE

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Who is your target audience?

Your editor

What is a good paper?

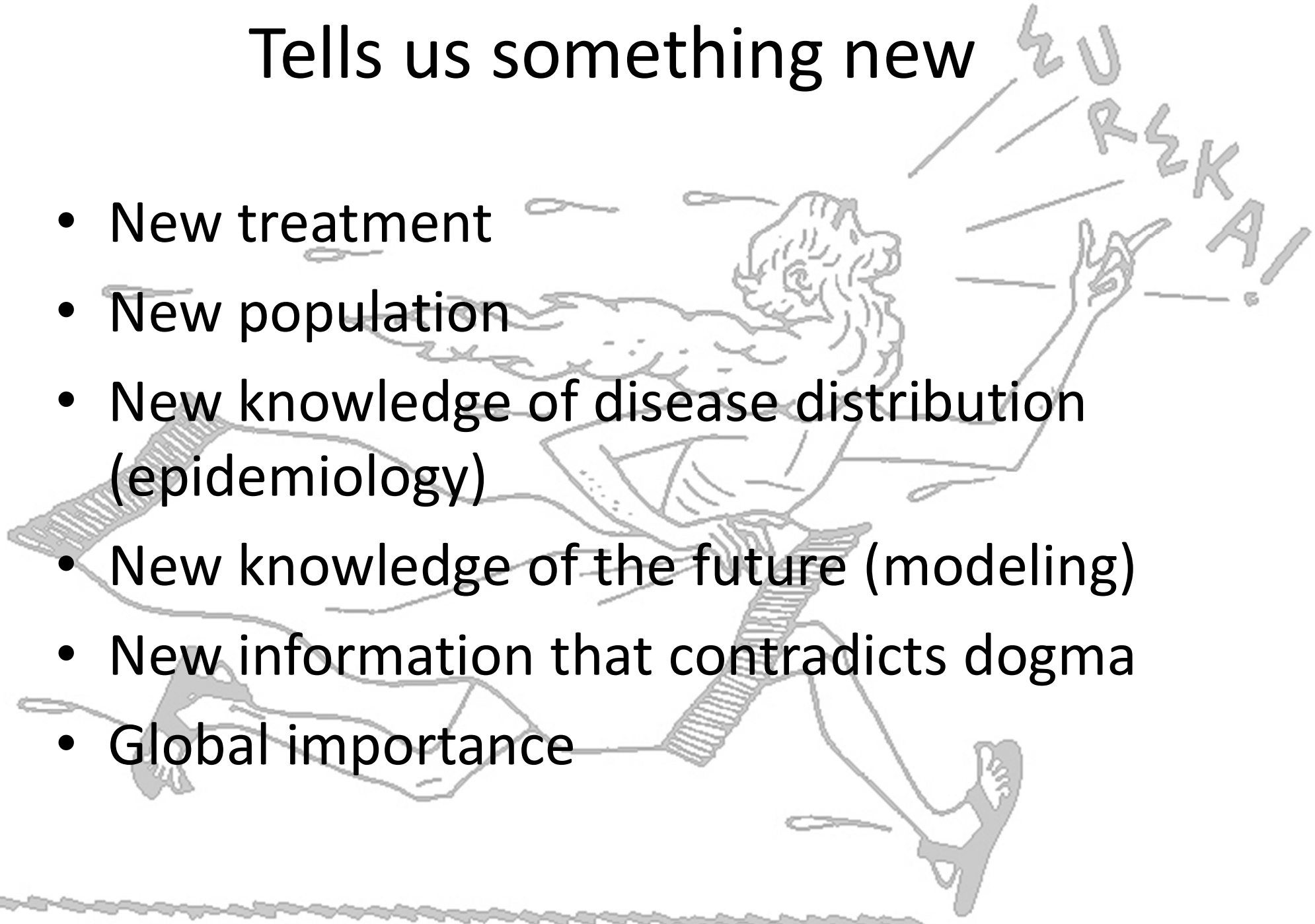
A published paper

WHAT DO EDITORS WANT

What do editors want?

- Importance
- Originality
- Relevance to the audience
- True
- Interesting/ “wow”
- Clearly written

Tells us something new



- New treatment
- New population
- New knowledge of disease distribution (epidemiology)
- New knowledge of the future (modeling)
- New information that contradicts dogma
- Global importance

What is peer review

- Review by peers
- Includes:
  - Internal review (by editorial staff)
  - External review (by experts in the field)
- Reviewers recruited by invitation, through volunteering, and by authors' suggestions

Why does this matter?

- You're no longer just in the science business, you're in the marketing business
  - You have a product for the marketplace
- Journals have more supply than space
  - Competitive marketplace
- Your market research, negotiation and management skills become important
  - Built on alignment of interests

THE IDEAL PAPER

The ideal paper

- Suitable for the journal
- Short
- Follows appropriate structure
  - IMRaD for original research
  - Other formats for policy analysis, editorials etc.
- Clearly written and presented
- Avoid “pithy” errors (typos, numerical presentation) by doing your own peer review

ICMJE Guidance

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors

www.icmje.org

Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*

I. About the Recommendations
A. Purpose of the Recommendations

A. Preparing a Manuscript for Submission to
ical Journal

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equator network

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Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research

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Welcome to the EQUATOR Network website – the resource centre for good reporting of health research studies

Too often, good research evidence is undermined by poor quality reporting.

The EQUATOR Network is an international initiative that seeks to improve reliability and value of medical research literature by promoting transparent and accurate reporting of research studies.

Highlights

EQUATOR Spanish website

New site launched on 16 July 2010 in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Find out more and visit the site

Promote good reporting

Print and display EQUATOR leaflets

EQUATOR Newsletter

New reporting guidelines, events, and other news. **Subscribe** now

Latest news

more news

EQUATOR is recruiting

We are seeking a Research Information Specialist / Website Assistant to support the development and promotion of our online resources and other activities.

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Reporting guidelines

Library for Health Research Reporting

Authors

Information for authors of research reports

Editors

Resources for journal editors and peer reviewers

Developers

Resources for developers of reporting guidelines

The EQUATOR Network is funded by:

NHS National Institute for Health Research | MRC Medical Research Council | CIHR IRSC | Chief Scientist Office | Pan American Health Organization

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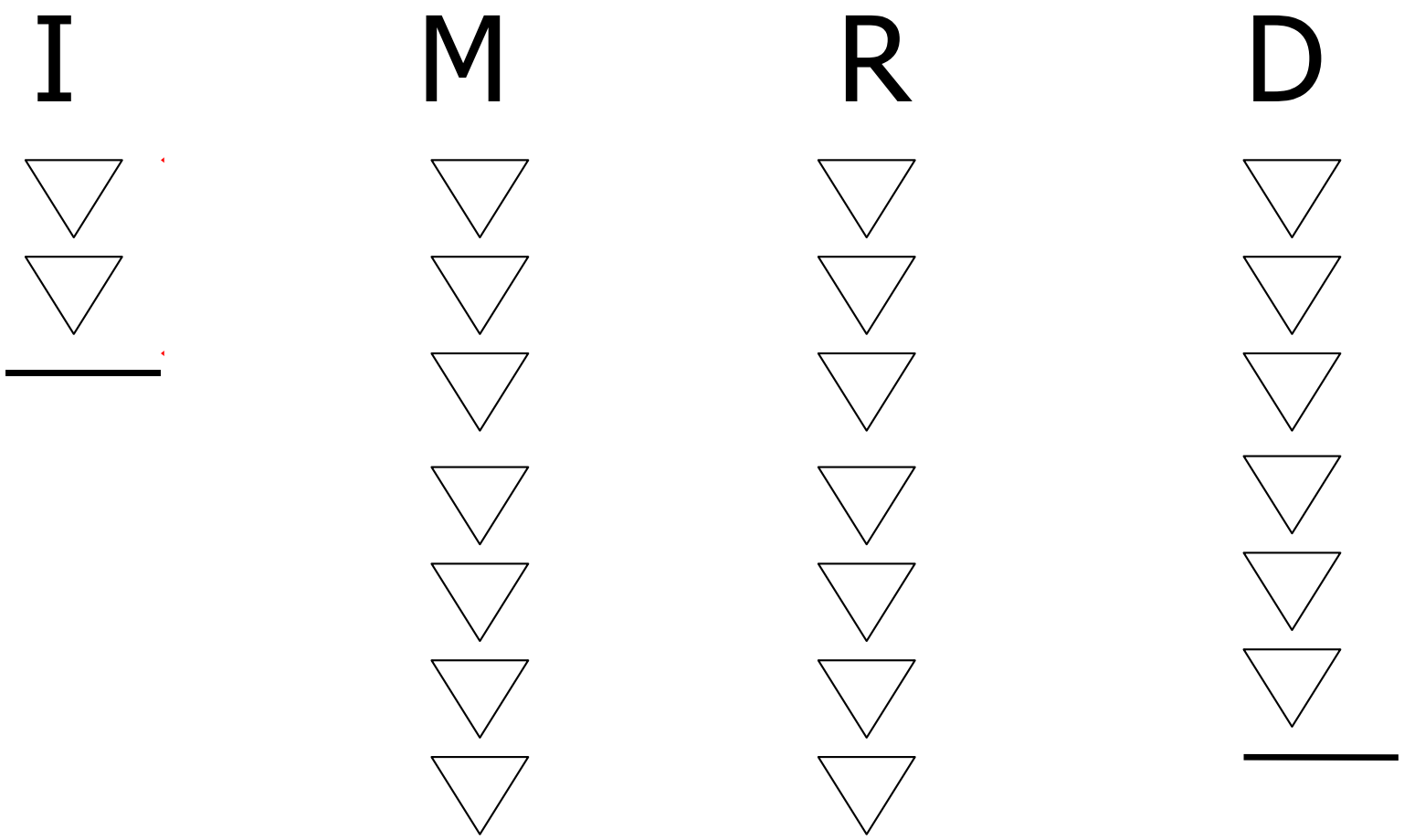
Designed and managed by Minervation

Structure is everything

- Introduction
- Method
- Results
- (And)
- Discussion



Credit: www.timalbert.co.uk

The ideal introduction (2)

- Why did we ask this question?
- What has gone before? (cite a systematic review)
- Why was this study needed?
- Are there controversies?
- *Be sure readers understand the importance of the study*

The ideal methods (7)

- Should be given in such detail to enable the qualified reader to repeat the experiment
- Like a recipe

The ideal methods (7)

- For informed readers this is the most important section
- Describe how subjects were selected and excluded
- Statistics
- Ethical considerations
- *Remember you can put more detailed methods on the web (e.g., questionnaire)*

The ideal results (7)

- Stick to what is relevant (keep it simple)
- Include basic descriptive data

- The text should tell the story
- The tables give the evidence
- The figures illustrate the highlights

Avoid beginning to discuss the implications or strengths and weaknesses of your study

The ideal discussion (6)

- Statement of principal findings
- Thoughtful interpretation
- Meaning of the study and implications
- Limitations and strengths
- Unanswered questions and future research

- *Go easy on the last two, don't need to answer all the questions in the world*

Figures and tables

- Add information
- Save space
- Self-explanatory
- Not overloaded with numbers or ink

The ideal abstract

- Short
- Structured (check journal guidelines)
- Matches content of paper
- Conclusions only for results presented
- Concise summary in easy language

Spend more time on this as it may be the only thing read

THE IDEAL STYLE

Scientific writing style

- Use the present for established facts
- Use the past to report what you did
- Use the future to report what you will do
- Write short, sequential sentences
- Each sentence contains one main idea
- Be specific
- Do not include footnotes
- Do not use bold or underlining

Use active voice

- The verb constitutes the centre of gravity of a sentence
- Make sure the verb contains the key idea

✘ We conducted an investigation of the outbreak
✓ We investigated the outbreak
✘ We took a sample of the population
✓ We sampled the population
✘ We made an assessment of the situation
✓ We assessed the situation

Active better than passive voice

- **Passive voice**
  - A study was conducted
  - A sample was selected
  - Questionnaires were administered
- **Active voice**
  - We conducted a study
  - We selected a sample
  - Field workers administered the questionnaires

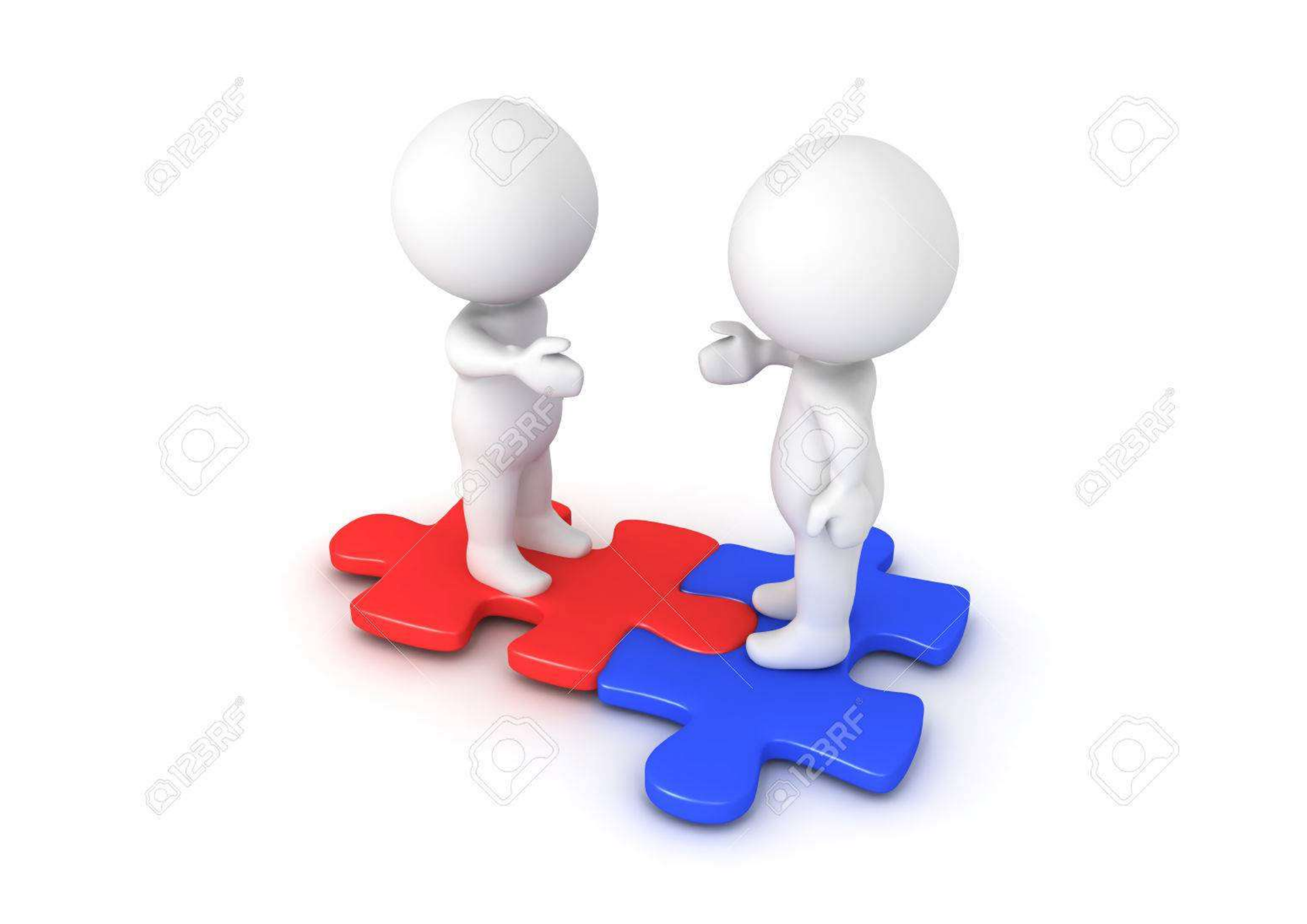
Scientific writing style

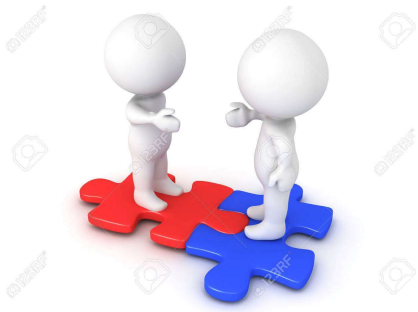
- Avoid qualifiers
  - *"This was a very large outbreak"*
- Avoid emphasis
  - *"This is the largest outbreak ever reported as thousands and thousands of people were affected"*
- Avoid accusations
  - *"Irresponsible behaviours among health care workers lead to the spread of this Lassa fever outbreak"*
- Avoid apologies
  - *"Because of a lack of resources we could not…"*
- Avoid "clearly"
  - *If it is clear, you don't need the word "clearly"*

What happens if we don't model the ideal paper or ideal style for medical journals?

- Reviewers (editors) miss the main points and decline to review
- Reviewers become frustrated and give more negative reviews
- Reviewers request additional data/analysis
- Submissions or publication time takes much longer than it should

2 MAKING A MATCH





You

- Your goals (and the goals of others)
- Who do you want to reach?
- Strength of your study design
- Importance/novelty of the work

Journal

- Vision/mission and *priorities*
- Its audience
- Appropriate section available (including word limits)
- Evidence of ‘thread’

Journals have codes

Oakmont a 'brutal' test

Our preview of the 107th U.S. Open begins on *Page S1*

5.79% the unmortgage ING DIRECT 1-877 MAKE IT UP

INDECENT EXPOSURE

Tina Brown's book more a portrait of celebrity journalism than a Diana biography. *Page A22*

NATIONAL POST

VOL. 0 NO. 150 THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2007 www.nationalpost.com

'I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL DO WITHOUT HIM'

Neighbours disagree on gang threat

ECONOMY RISK REAL: DODGE

Shrinking workforce must improve its productivity

Meeting's off, NHL tells Balsillie

touch me ... turn me on touch 6.0 SANYO

SANYO delivers technology in style.

The new SANYO cordless phone with touch smooth-surface keypad operates in the latest DECT 6.0* frequency band to provide WiFi friendly, interference-free calls.

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CLASS ACTION SOUGHT IN LAWSUIT OVER GM GASKET FAILURE E1

TORONTO STAR

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2006

Transit windfall for Ontario

Cash from Ottawa will come in next week's budget to help with subway expansion — as well as housing and campus buildings

Trust funds

FORBIDDEN THE IMAGE YOU AREN'T SUPPOSED TO SEE

Union Station's $100M reno deal crumbles

Private plan in works for 6 years

Miller refuses another extension

Return of fallen soldiers not meant for public eyes

FLAGS Tale of two cities

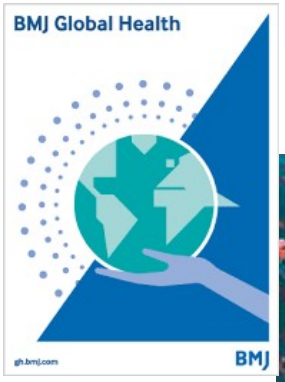
Montreal to use GPS

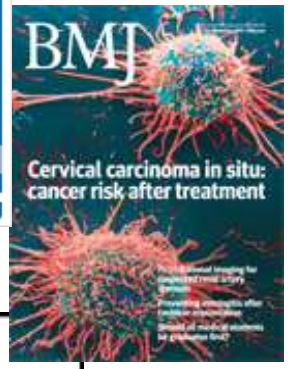
CHANTAL HEBERT

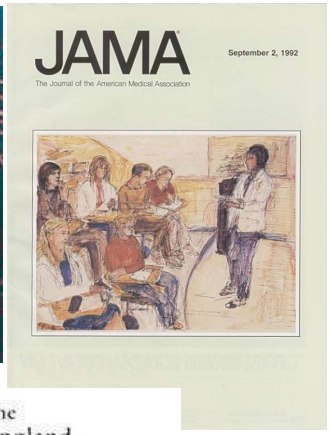
OBITUARY

majira
JK akasiri
MTANZANIA
Miaka 50 ya Muungano
THE CITIZEN
The Guardian
DAILY NEWS

Journals have codes







What does The BMJ want?

About The BMJ

Who we are, and what we stand for

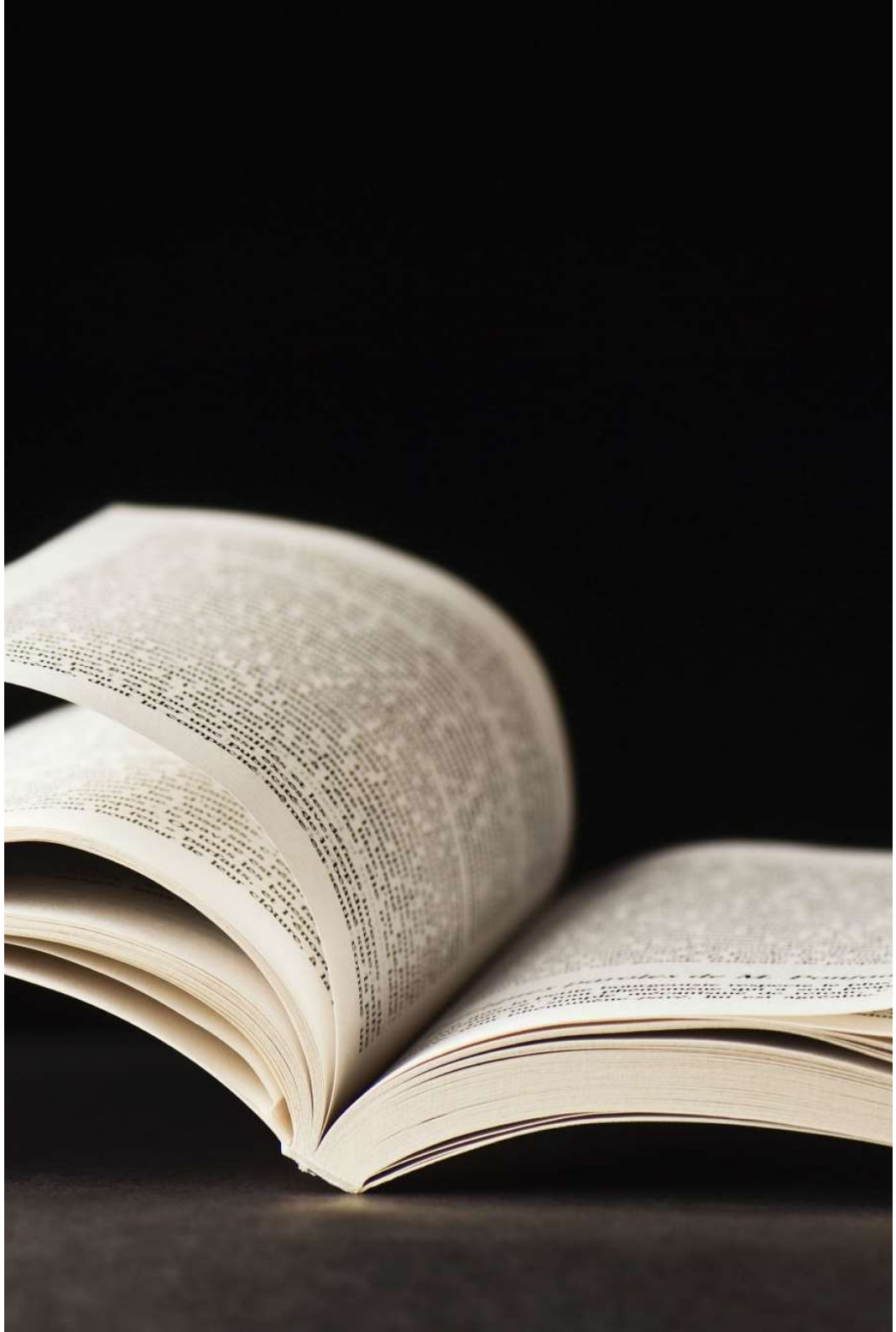
The BMJ is defined by its mission: to work towards a healthier world for all. We share that global endeavour with millions of readers working in clinical practice, research, education, government, and with patients and the public too.

This mission defines us, far more than the format of our content. After nearly 180 years, our print edition still thrives, and has been joined by podcast, video, tweet, app, website and live events. But, as each of these formats gains ground or declines in importance, the things *The BMJ* cares about will endure:

- *Improving the creation and dissemination of research evidence*
- *Improving clinical education and practice*
- *Advocating for universal, equitable, high quality healthcare*
- *Championing the health and wellbeing of doctors*
- *Improving the social and environmental determinants of health*

While pursuing these goals, we commit to partnering with patients and the public to ensure their best interests are served; and to being as transparent and accountable as possible in everything we do.

The BMJ can be many things to its diverse audiences: an international research journal, a member magazine, a think tank, an investigative campaigner, an educational resource, even a trusted and inspiring friend. Whatever *The BMJ* means to you, we invite you to share our mission and join us in working towards a healthier world for all.



Information for Authors

- **Guidelines for Authors PDF**
- **Author forms**

The Lancet is an international general medical journal and invites submissions of any original contribution that advances or illuminates medical science or practice, or that educates or entertains the journal's readers. We publish research Articles, randomised controlled trials, meta-analyses, Reviews, Seminars, Personal Views, Comments, Correspondence, and additional Perspectives and World Reports. For more information on the types of papers and manuscript requirements please read the Guidelines for Authors.

The journal is indexed in MEDLINE/PubMed, Scopus, and in the *Journal Citation Reports*™. *The Lancet* journals are signatories of the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals issued by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE Recommendations) and to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) code of conduct for editors. We follow COPE's guidelines.

Whatever you have written, remember that it is the general reader whom you are trying to reach. One way to find out if you have succeeded is to show your draft to colleagues in other specialties. *If they do not understand, neither, very probably, will The Lancet's staff or readers.*

Home > BMC Global and Public Health > Collections and calls for papers

BMC Global and Public Health

Publishing model
Open access

Submit your manuscript →

Editorial board | Aims and scope

Collections and calls for papers

Filter by: (•) All ( ) Upcoming ( ) Open ( ) Closed ( ) Articles available

Call for papers – Addressing public health concerns in incarceration and community corrections

BMC Global and Public Health is calling for submissions to our Collection on addressing public health concerns in incarceration and community correction.

Submission status
Open

Submission deadline
02 December 2024

MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT

What’s the most important thing your paper contains?

A message

Message

- Your message is what your paper says
- Too many papers fail because it isn’t absolutely clear what is being said
- If you cannot describe your message clearly, your writing will probably fail

Credit: www.timalbert.co.uk

Message

- A single sentence
- Contains a verb
- Not your objective
- Not your title

NO: We examined whether a special intervention improved skills in manuscript writing.

NO: An intensive, tailored training intervention to improve skills in manuscript writing: randomized controlled trial

YES: Intensive, tailored training improved skills in manuscript writing

Title vs message

Effect of local maternal and newborn stakeholder groups on neonatal mortality: cluster-randomized controlled trial

Facilitated local stakeholder groups increased attendance to antenatal care and reduced neonatal mortality

- Identify your message before writing
- Write your paper to your message (not the subject of your paper)

- First line of your abstract's Conclusion
- First line of your paper's Discussion
- Second paragraph of your covering letter
- Headline of your journal's press release

EXERCISE

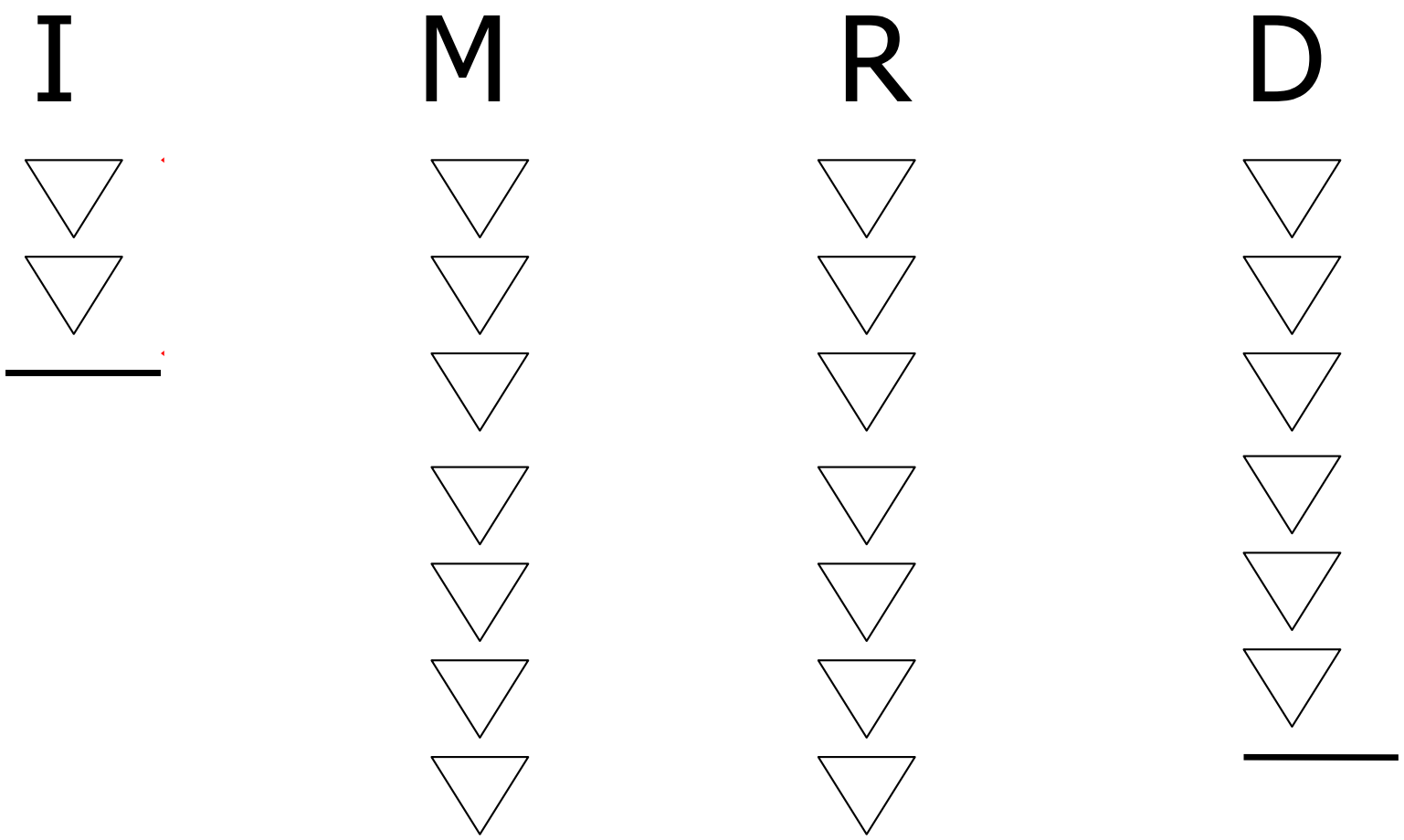
Why does this matter?

- It will transform your writing and your publication success
- Define your message before writing
- Write your paper to your message (not the subject)
- Highly versatile tool (to get unstuck, get focused, regroup)

4 INTRODUCING THE FOUR STEP PROCESS

More time spent thinking = less time struggling with writing

- Introduction
- Method
- Results
- (And)
- Discussion



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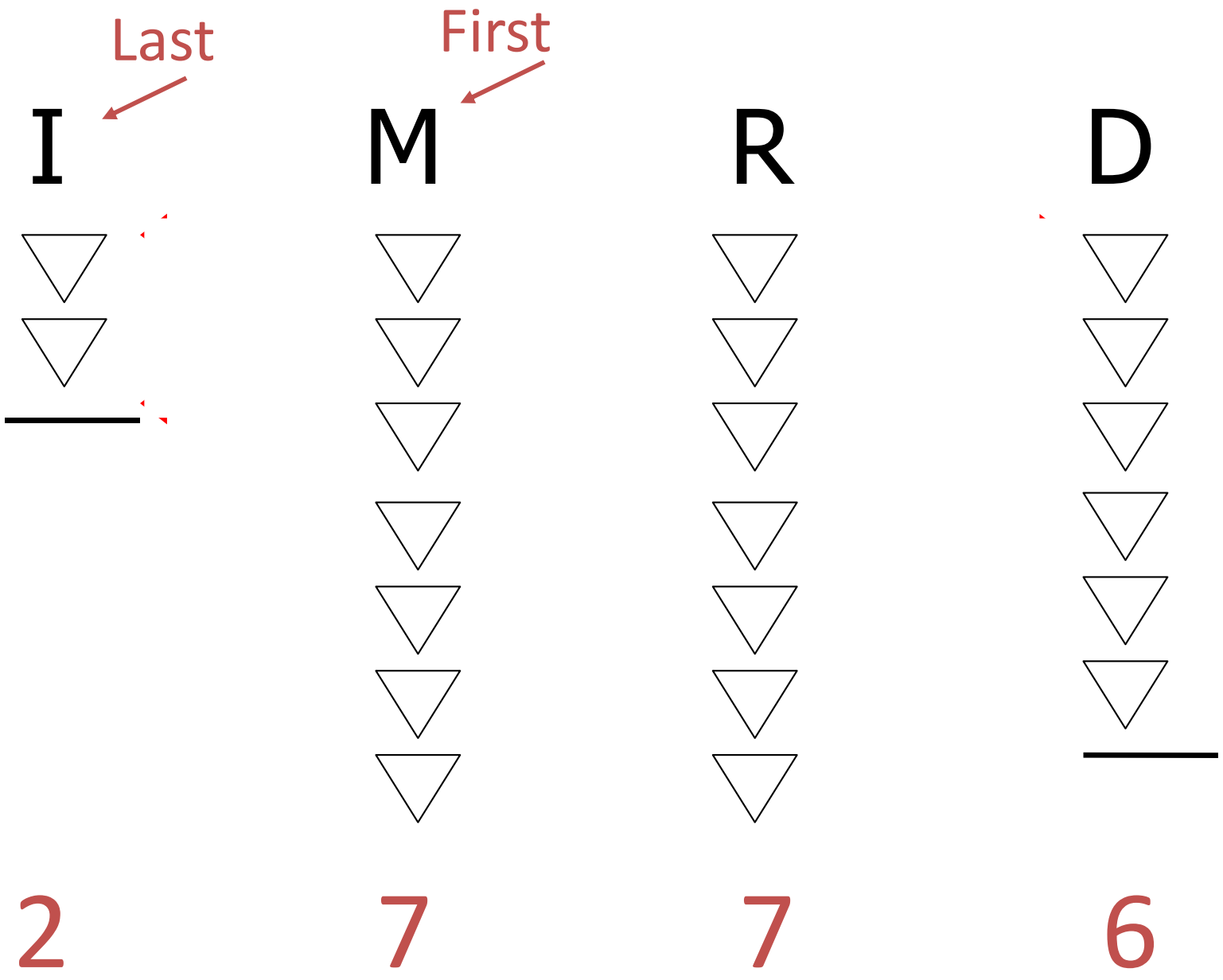
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First
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2
7
7
6

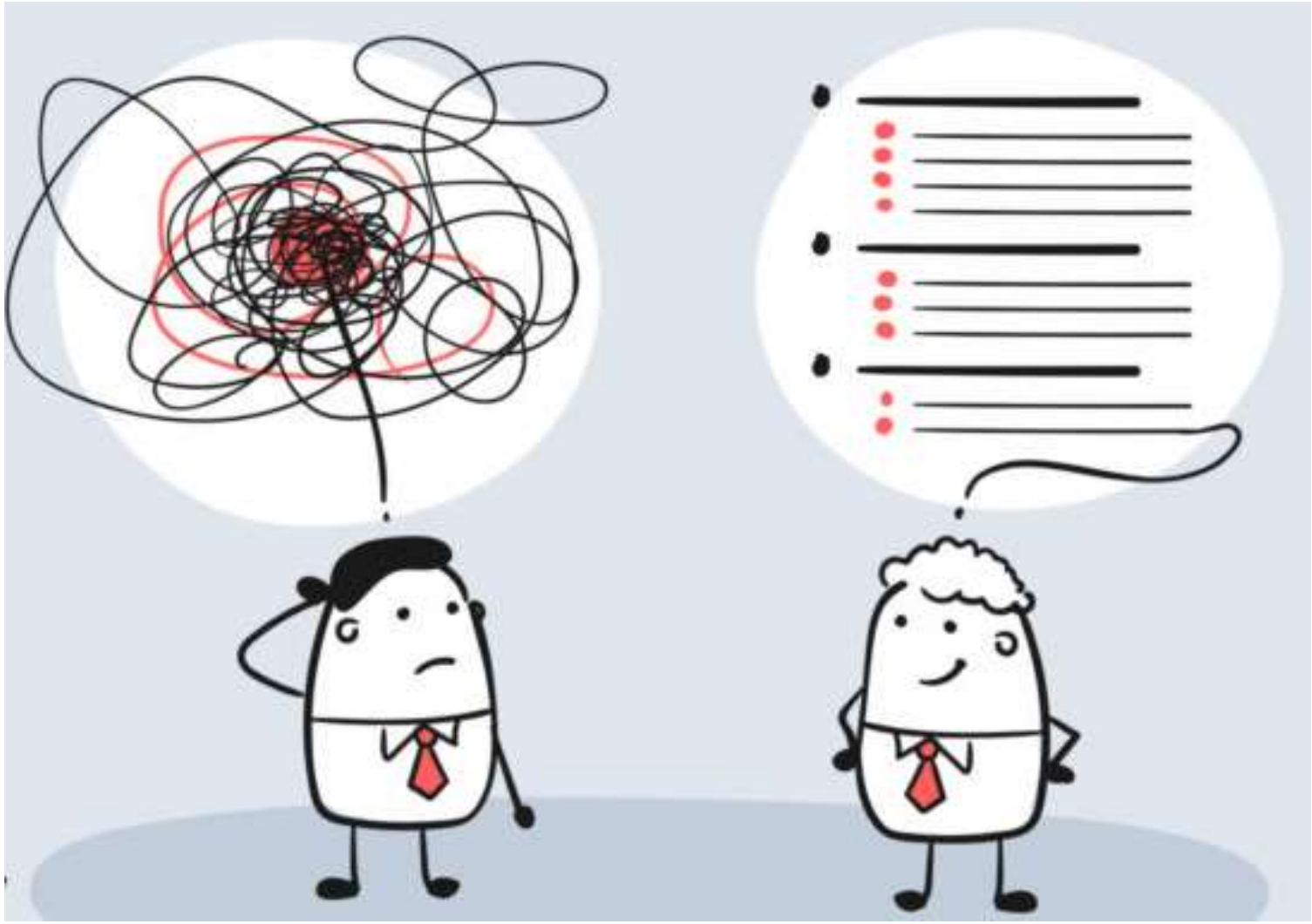
An emerging structure from your message

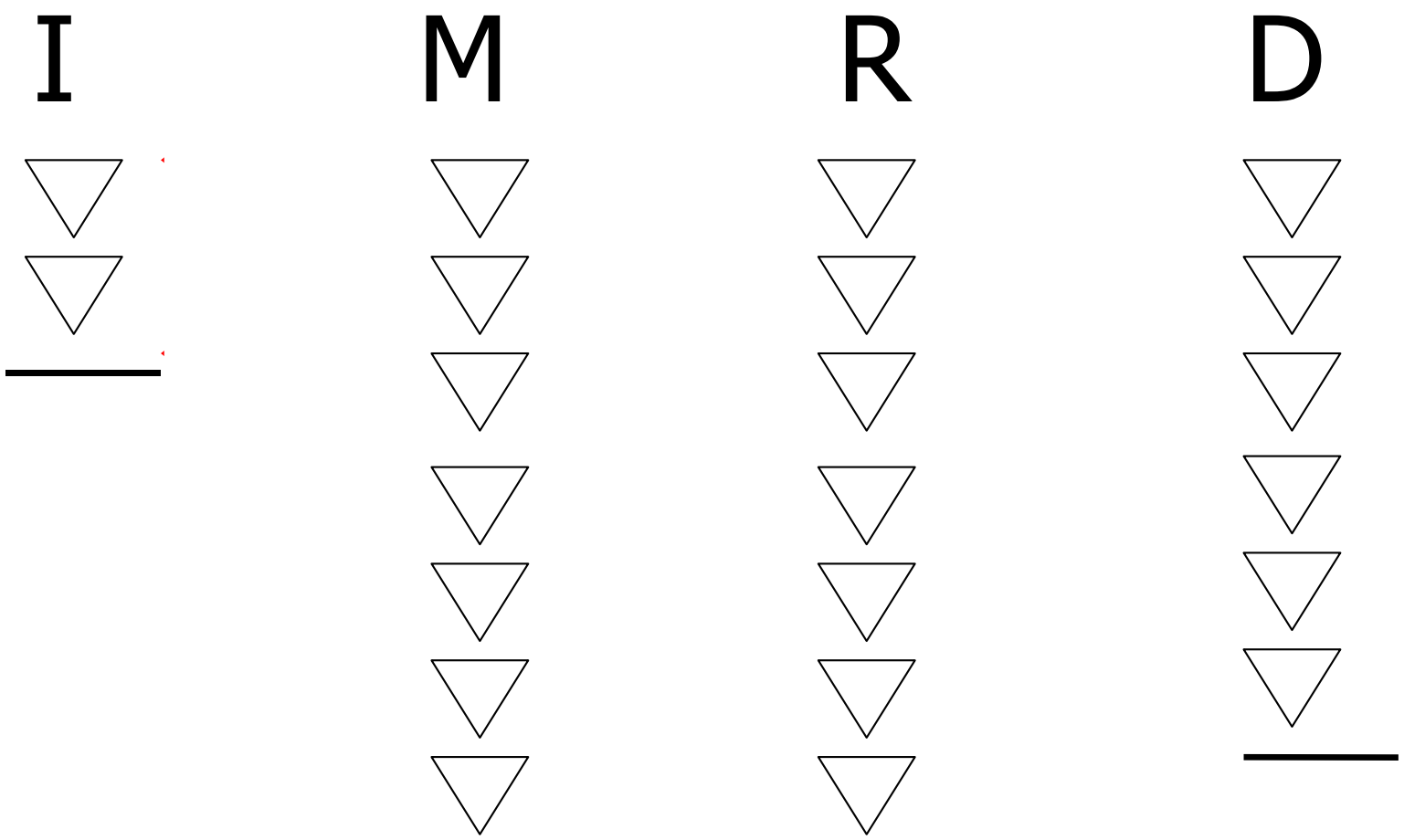
- Why we started
- What we did
- What we found
- What it means

Credit: www.timalbert.co.uk

An emerging structure from your message

- Why we started → Introduction
- What we did → Methods
- What we found → Results
- What it means → Discussion





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1-2-3-4

Get ready to get working!

1) Collect your ideas: *the thinking step*
   MESSAGE
2) Download your information: *the organizing step* CONCEPT MAP (SPIDERGRAM)
3) Synthesize the information: *the outlining step*
   OUTLINE
4) Draft your manuscript: *the writing step*
   DRAFT

1) Collect your ideas: *the thinking step*

- What do I have to say?
- What about my study do I want to share?
- What did I find?
- What is the message I want to put across?

- **Exercise**: define your message
- Single sentence, contains a verb, 12 words

2) Download your information: *the organizing step*

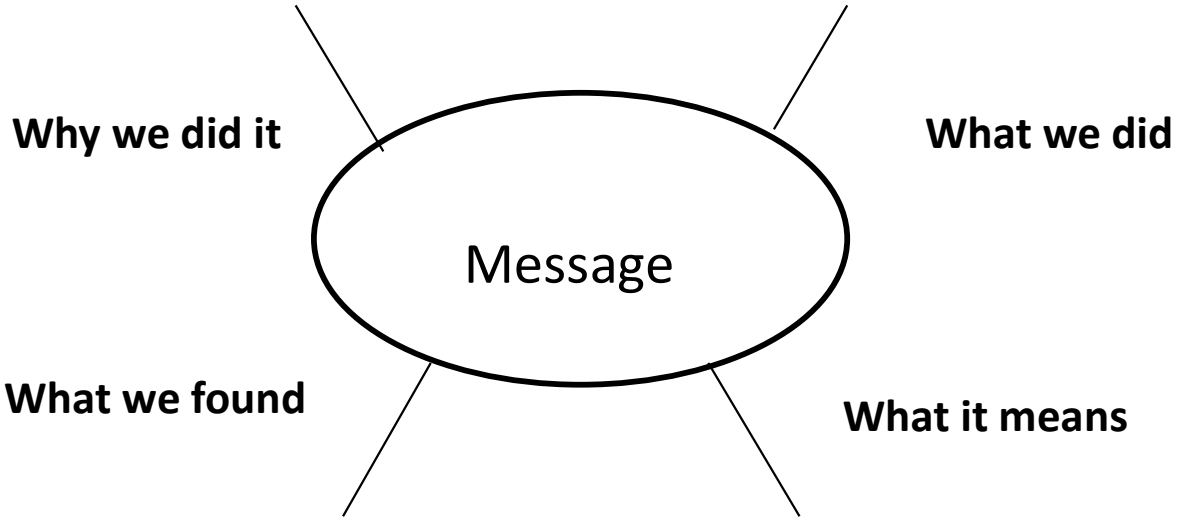
- Why did we do this study?
- What did we do?
- What did we find?
- What does it mean?

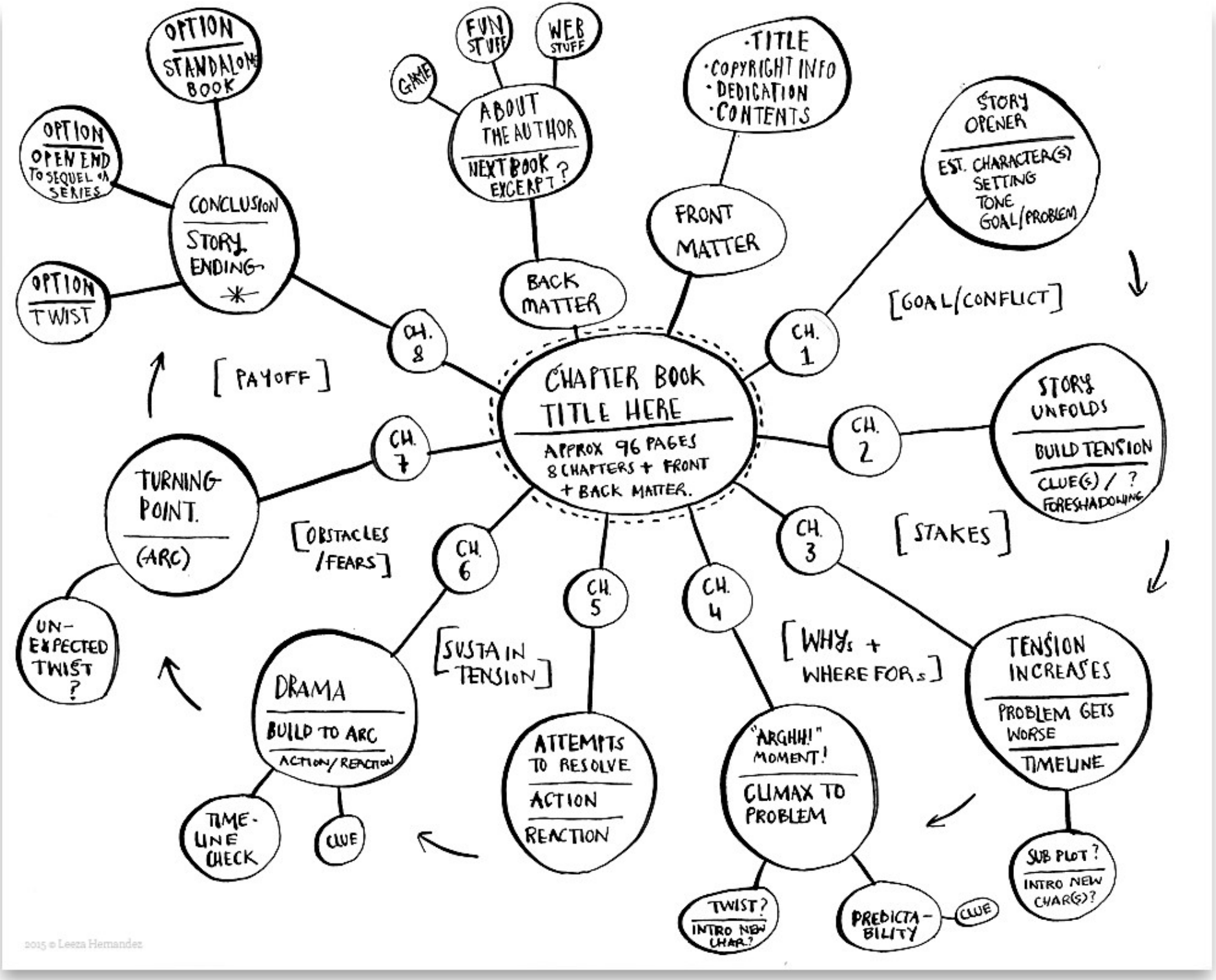
- **Exercise**: concept map

An emerging structure from your message

- Why we did the study → Introduction
- What we did → Methods
- What we found → Results
- What it means → Discussion

Concept map





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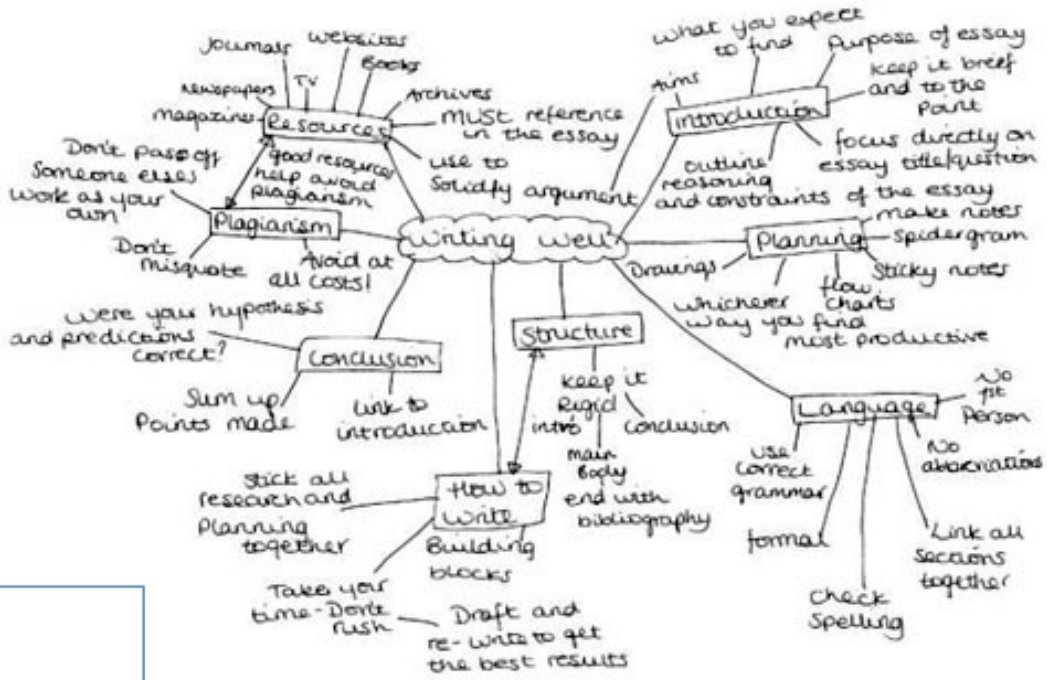
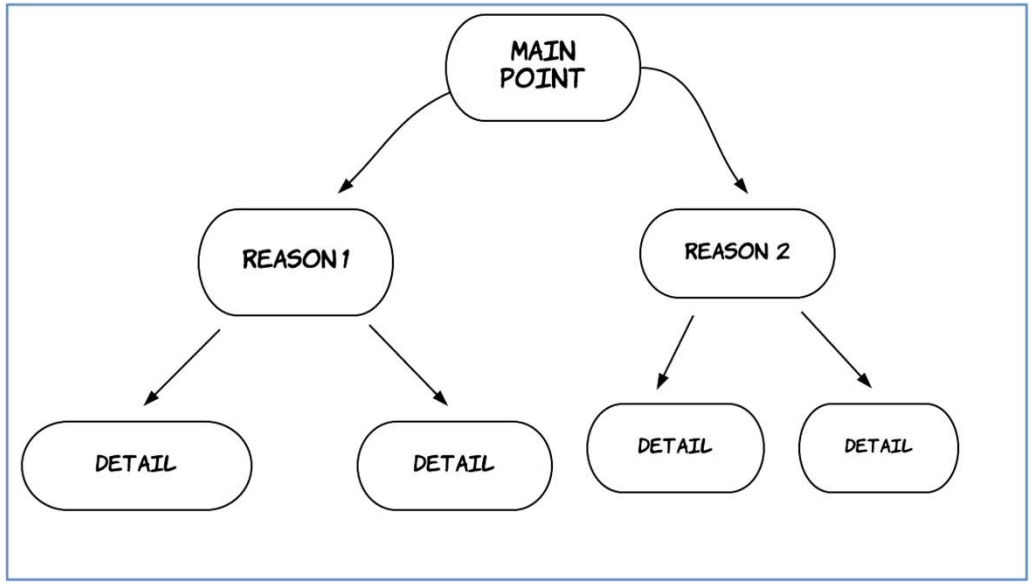
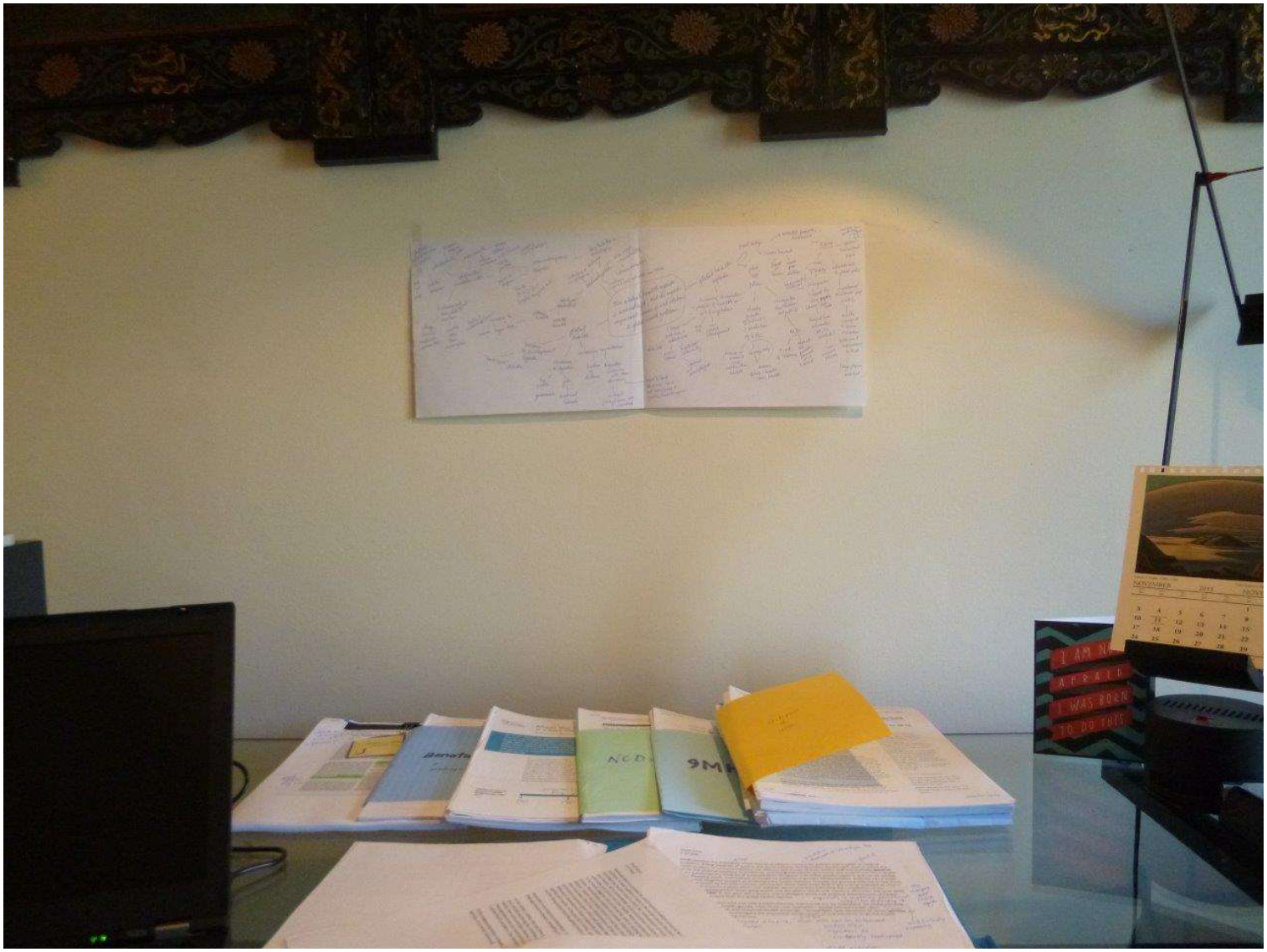
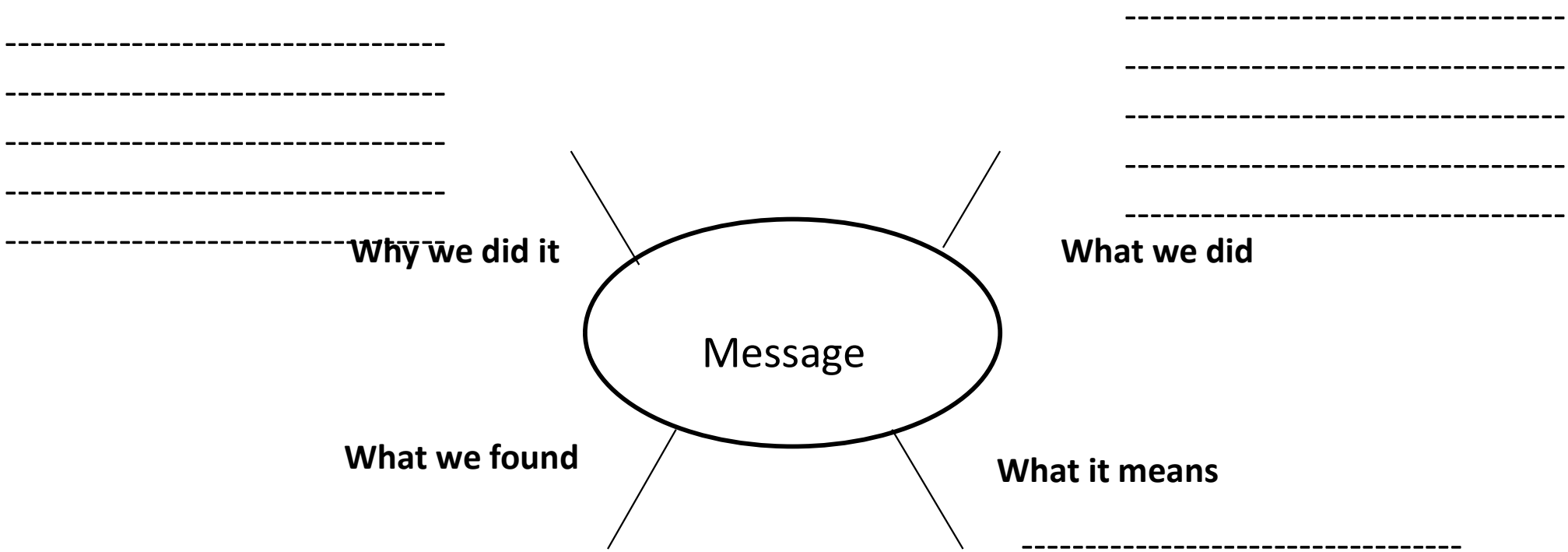
CELEBRATIONS
FESTIVALS
Diwali
Holi
Christmas
Easter
symbols (eg. 4)
MARRIAGE
groom
bride
clothes
jewellery
ceremony
MUSIC
decorations
symbols.
BIRTHDAYS
parties
Presents
decorations
CHILDREN/BABIES
balmuvara (shaving of hair)
christening


Writing well
Resources
Journals
Websites
Books
TV
Newspapers
Magazines
Archives
MUST reference in the essay
Good resource help avoid plagiarism
Use to solidify argument
Plagiarism
Don't pass off someone elses work as your own
Don't misquote
Avoid at all costs!
Introduction
What you expect to find
Purpose of essay
Keep it brief and to the point
Aims
Outline reasoning and constraints of the essay
focus directly on essay title/question
Planning
make notes
spidergram
Sticky notes
flow charts
Drawings
whichever way you find most productive
Conclusion
Were you hypothesis and predictions correct?
Sum up Points made
Link to introduction
Structure
Keep it Rigid
intro
main Body
conclusion
end with bibliography
Language
No 1st Person
No abbreviations
Use correct grammar
formal
Link all sections together
Check Spelling
How to Write
Stick all research and Planning together
Building blocks
Take your time - Don't rush
Draft and re-write to get the best results


MAIN POINT
REASON 1
REASON 2
DETAIL
DETAIL
DETAIL
DETAIL


I AM NOT
AFRAID
I WAS BORN
TO DO THIS

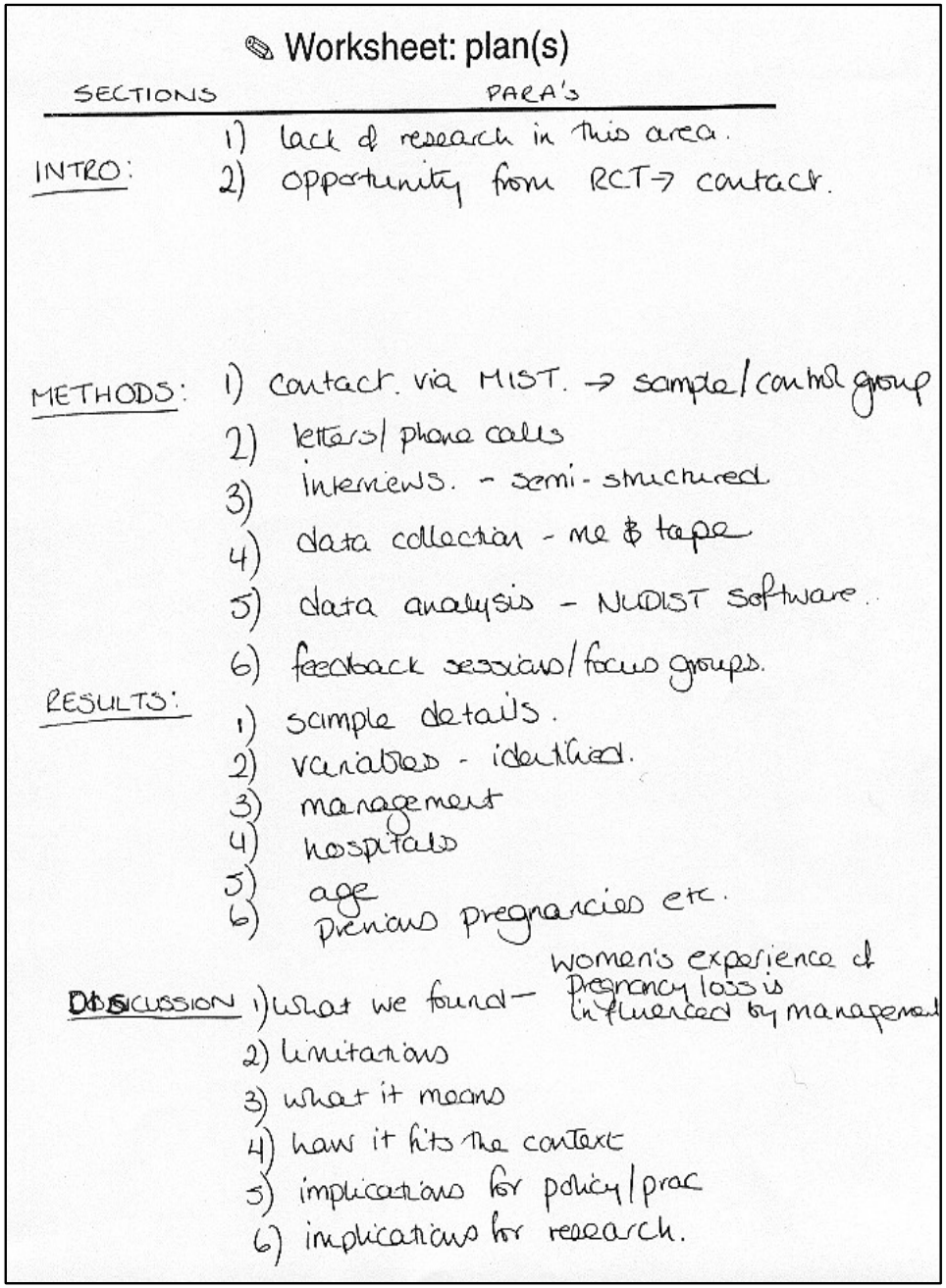
Concept map



C. Synthesize the information: *the outlining step*

- Introduction (*why did we do this study*)
- Methods (*what did we do*)
- Results (*what did we find*)
- Discussion (*what does it mean*)

- **Exercise**: make a bullet-point outline



✎ Worksheet: plan(s)

SECTIONS — PARA's

INTRO:
1) lack of research in this area.
2) opportunity from RCT → contact.

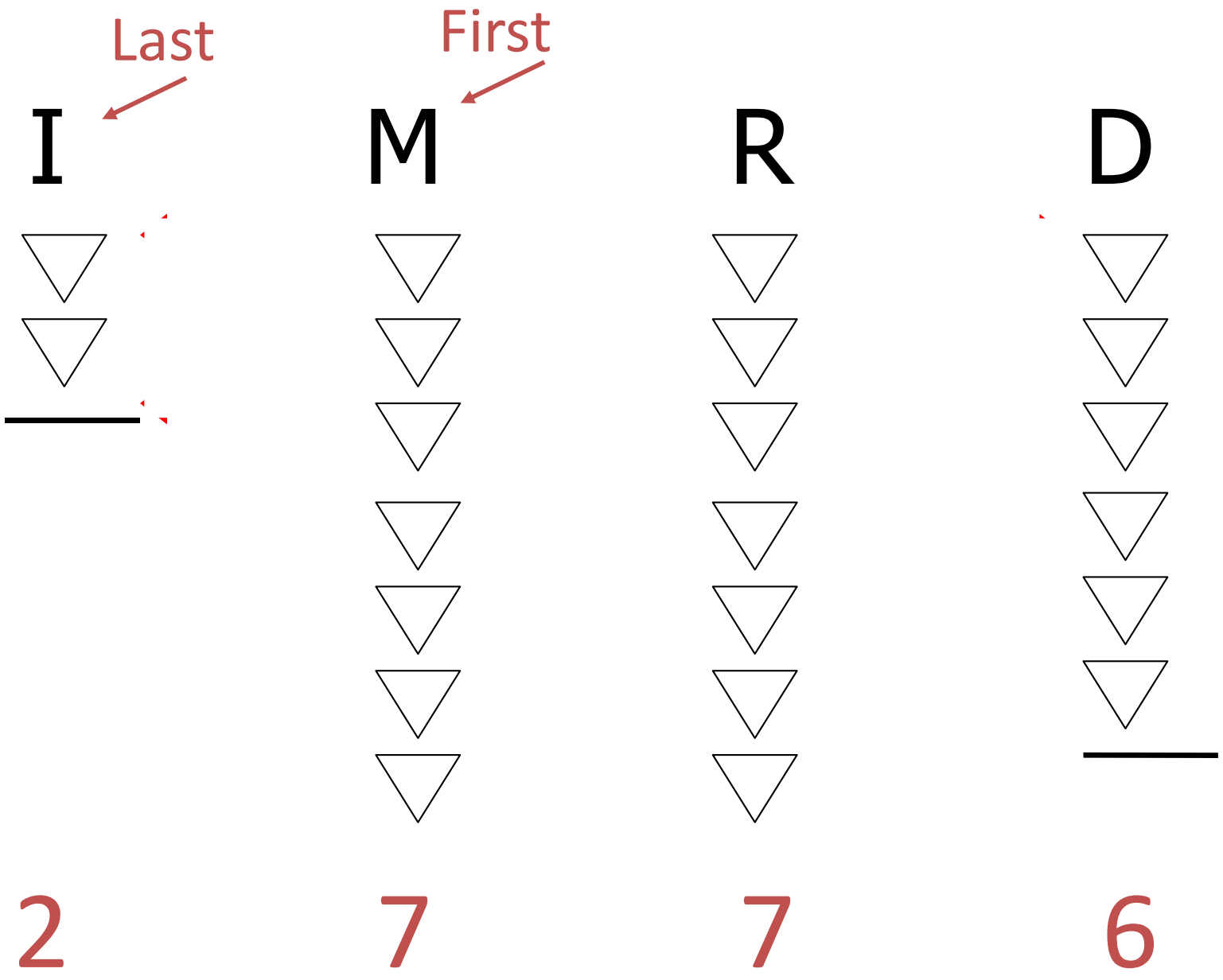
METHODS:
1) contact via MIST. → sample/control group
2) letters/phone calls
3) interviews. - semi-structured
4) data collection - me & tape
5) data analysis - NUDIST software.
6) feedback sessions/focus groups.

RESULTS:
1) sample details.
2) variables - identified.
3) management
4) hospitals
5) age
6) previous pregnancies etc.

DISCUSSION
1) what we found — women's experience of pregnancy loss is influenced by management
2) limitations
3) what it means
4) how it fits the context
5) implications for policy/prac
6) implications for research.

MESSAGE

- **Introduction**
  - **1 (Main point paragraph 1)**
  - **2 (Main point paragraph 2)**
- **Methods**
  - **1**
  - **2**
  - **3**
  - **4**
  - **5**
  - **6**
  - **7**
- **Results**
  - **1**
  - **2**
  - **3**
  - **4**
  - **5**
  - **6**
  - **7**
- **Discussion**
  - **1**
  - **2**
  - **3**
  - **4**
  - **5**
  - **6**


Last
First
I
M
R
D
2
7
7
6

D. Draft your manuscript: *the writing step*

- Use a timer or your smartphone
- Write non-stop for 5 minutes (no stopping!)

- Use a yellow highlighter to pull out key points

- Do it again – write non-stop for 5 minutes

EXERCISE

1. Why did we do this study?
2. What did we do?
3. What did we find?
4. What does it mean?

EXERCISE

1. Introduction

Provide a context or background for the study –

State the specific purpose or research objective of, or hypothesis tested by

Do not include data or conclusions from the work being reported

2. Methods

- Selection and description of participants
- Study's main and secondary objectives
- Statistical methods

3. Results

- Give numeric results not only as derivatives (for example, percentages) but also as the absolute numbers
- Specify the statistical significance attached to them, if any.
- Mention any stratification and subgroup results.

4. Discussion

- Statement of principal finding (s)
- Explanation for finding
- Main strength and weaknesses
- Implications for future research

EXERCISE

Summary for today

- You need time for thinking before writing → prioritise thinking time
- You have a product to “sell” in the competitive marketplace
- Journals have different priorities and characters, and these are known to you
- Your target audience is your editor(s). To “win” you need to put your message across clearly

Thank you!
Questions?