

A TEMPLATE AND GUIDE TO WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS

(REPLACE WITH YOUR OWN TITLE)

MARKUS KITTLER

Academic Director

MCI Executive PhD Program in Management

MCI Entrepreneurial School

Universitaetsstrasse 15

A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria

email: markus.kittler@mci.edu

(Replace with your own details
and other contact if applicable)

Dear reader,

this is a draft and template for designing a scholarly manuscript in the context of business and management related research. I use the example of a literature review as overviews what we know about a specific topic is a task, possibly a challenge, which many new to academic writing will face at some point.

Instead of writing a classic “How to”-guide I thought it is helpful to provide you with a template which is in an instant “guide-while-you-write”-format. If you obtained this document as a pdf file, I strongly recommend getting a hold of the word document for ease of use. If you don’t have access online (e.g. via www.mci.edu), contact my colleagues at the MCI Executive Education (Executive PhD Program) for a free copy or access.

In my view, it is helpful to briefly scan through this document first and then start to replace my text with your own work, bit by bit building up your first draft of a review paper. If you find the information in this paper helpful, it would be nice to acknowledge this paper with a short reference to it in your own work. With some variation depending on your referencing style, you should record this reference and cite this paper as:

Kittler, M. (2020) *A Template and Guide to Writing Academic Papers*. Retrieved from/ Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3549317>

As you will not need this textbox any longer, you can simply delete it. An important lesson for academic writing is to remove text that is no longer needed in a manuscript. Deleting unnecessary text might feel hard with parts of your own, carefully crafted work, so simply start here with mine and delete this text box.

All the best with your future work!

Dr. Markus Kittler

(DELETE IN FULL IF NOT APPLICABLE) Acknowledgements

If you wish to acknowledge financial support or other assistance, add a note at the bottom of your title page.

YOUR PAPER (ADD YOUR OWN TITLE)

ABSTRACT

A one page abstract should go on this second page. The abstract should usually not exceed a page and leave room for some keywords below. Informing the reader about the essence of your work is quite an important element in scholarly communication. If you are seeking guidance on how to write an abstract, there are many informative web pages like this guide at emerald: <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/authors/guides/write/abstracts.htm>. For writing a decent abstract, I recommend to reflect on the expected essence of your paper early on and produce a draft of your abstract ahead of conducting your research (giving you a good idea of what you plan to write). Then revise, complete and polish after the paper is finished to ensure that it gives an accurate overview of what you have actually done in the paper. Typical contents here could be a brief contextualization and the purpose of the paper (mandatory). Additionally your abstract captures the design/methodology/approach and briefly illustrates key findings, also diplomatically admitting the research limitations/implications. With the contribution to knowledge being an essential aspect of academic publishing, the abstract should clearly indicate the value/contribution/relevance of the work you did, e.g. by highlighting its theoretical, practical or even social implications (if applicable), eventually informing the reader about the originality and value of the manuscript (otherwise, why should they be interested to read it).

Keywords

(Add a set of 4-6 words of what best captures your work) Abstract, Academic Writing, Contribution, Format Guidelines, Literature Review, Template

INTRODUCTION

This first paragraph is about introducing your work. It could simply start with a way to contextualize the problem to which you contribute. For instance, this could be on an observation that is well illustrating the phenomenon under study. In the context of this work, an observation to share is that many PhD students at times tend to struggle with their writing and report that they find it challenging to introduce the reader to their ideas and insights. The latter can indeed be a challenging task, particularly for novices to scholarly research. A potential explanation for this observation is that the academic audience communicates differently from what we might be used to in personal communication or exchange among business practitioners (Kittler, 2018)¹. A frequent question asked by students in this context is what I would recommend on the timing to write an introduction. I usually suggest (for the main body of the document) to write the introduction first and to revise it last. I feel that it is helpful to write the introduction in order to force oneself to reflect on what the paper is about, how it will flow, what it will contain (and what it will not contain). The introduction is there to not only give the reader an overview on what will happen, leaving little surprise about the content in general (but also not disclosing all the magic of your paper fully, yet). The initial draft needs to be revised again towards the end as academic work usually develops and sometimes shifts its focus. Hence, revising a paper towards the end means that these changes during the paper development and revision stages are considered in the final version and the introduction then does not propose what the paper eventually will not deliver. After reading this (rather long) paragraph now delete

¹ You usually will not find many footnotes like this one in most management related research papers. So, use them carefully and only if required. Check if your format guidelines suggest the use of footnotes placed on their respective pages or as endnotes (not to be mixed up with the referencing software here). It might be worthwhile to point out, that all your referencing should be done in one format and – once chosen – should be done correctly and in a consistent manner. As we do not need this footnote here, you could now delete it.

it and share your own observation or contextualization leading towards the actual problem statement (also citing key sources of information you use).

Once the reader is interested in the context provided, I would then blend directly into your problem statement in a second paragraph. Of course, you could also use one or two paragraphs more to position your topic, particular when writing a longer paper or a full thesis document. However, quite often, the intro then becomes too long and complex and does a poor job in getting and focusing the readers' attention answering the following question(s) in a concise manner: What seems to be the problem in this given context and what part of this problem do you set out to resolve? Often, it might help to think about an 'ideal' or desirable state, the 'reality' or current state and the difference to the desirable state and the consequences this difference might have to whom (already identifying key stakeholders). For instance, the problem statement in this paper template could be that barriers exist that prevent the dissemination of new knowledge. While working towards a PhD (or a conference or journal submission), papers need to be written in a scholarly manner adhering to formal guidelines of the target of submission to become a part in the academic debate (desirable state). However, there are quite a few papers that are rejected mainly because of a lack of ability by the authors to craft such a paper – often despite possibly a good idea that would merit acceptance (current state in many PhD projects in their early stages). The consequence is that ideas that would advance our knowledge could be withheld from the academic debate or enter it with a delay for revising such work. This difference between desirable and current state should be reduced. Typical stakeholders in this context could be PhD students or early career academics (or academics who generally struggle to get their ideas on paper independent of their stage in the academic career) by not being heard, the academic community by not being exposed to potentially interesting findings, or the relevant practitioner community. Mitchell, Agle, and

Wood (1997) present some widely cited reflection on identifying stakeholders. If research is understood as a project, Aaltonen (2011) also provides some good thoughts on interpreting the project environment and corresponding stakeholder analysis phases. Now reflect and write about the problem your paper intends to solve and for whom this might be relevant – to replace my problem statement.

You could also decide to add another paragraph in relation to your problem statement, or expanding on axiological concerns, or – particularly when starting with a grand challenge (e.g. climate change) – narrowing it down to a smaller part of the problem (e.g. malfunctioning energy policies). When choosing a topic, often students are very ambitious at the start but then also are confronted with their own ‘real’ rather than ‘ideal’ research world, finding out that the initial topic might be a bit too big to capture in full and select specific areas within a wider topic to focus on. I admit that providing a clear problem statement is also a very challenging task, particularly when the topic choice is not determined by external forces, e.g. by a sponsor. Sponsors might have a clear idea on what they want to know - which then at least tells us what to do in our research and shifts the challenge from making a decision about research to communicating the decision. When canvassing the problem you plan to contribute to in the paragraph above (being consistent with the context in which the problem emerges or persists and with the phenomenon or observation you described above in your first paragraph), I found Colquitt and George’s (2011)² AMJ editorial quite helpful. They argue that criteria of effective

² Again, another footnote you should delete after reading. This is just on reflecting a common phenomenon, the role of in-text referencing and the challenges attached to it. I could now simply refer you to the APA or MLA manuals but many references you use are probably among those 2x3 typical configurations: There are the two scenarios with (a) author/s in parentheses “(Kittler, 2018)” and (b) author/s outside of the parentheses “Kittler (2018) argues“. For each scenario, there could be one author, two authors (Colquitt and George, 2011) or three or more authors (e.g., Rattrie, Kittler and Paul (2020) often simplified as Rattrie et al. (2020) in text). For the more specific cases, e.g., the first citation of 3 to 6 authors or even the use of apostrophes for forming possessives with singular names (Dickens’s work or Smith’s study), I would not worry much early on. Particularly in early stages and at least in the first draft of your work (if not using a reference software anyway) use common sense on how your referencing might be consistent with the basic style guide. This comment is by no means a recommendation or even a license to disregard formal aspects, but an invitation to focus on your writing and leave such details, though important for consistency of your referencing, up for further scrutiny in a later proofread. This might be particularly helpful if time towards a deadline is short as it might be much more likely that a work is rejected because its contents is weak rather than having a work rejected because the odd in-text reference is not consistent with the preferred styleguide, particularly when most of the referencing is acceptable. Now please delete this footnote from your document. Such a long footnote is rather uncommon anyway. With this much information, we might well have a separate chapter on formal aspects.

topics are significance, novelty, curiosity, scope, and actionability. The problem statement for this paper (taken from a broader problem of barriers to knowledge exchange above) could for instance be narrowed down to PhD students who start their PhDs but struggle to write it (and hence to infuse their work into the academic debate). We could focus further on the initial engagement with the literature and the challenge to produce a first overview of the literature to be discussed with (potential) supervisors. The paper hence might be interesting to the reader because of its significance to a critical population of PhD or ambitious master students. While writing a thesis might rather be a challenge at the microlevel for the individual student, I like this idea of topics contributing to “grand challenges” as many PhD projects are somehow related to such a challenge. I remember well when one of my former PhD students used reference to the “grand challenge”-aspect referring to Colquitt and George (2011) in his viva when asked about the relevance of the contribution he made. What is your own effective topic? Replace this paragraph, possibly with your own narrow problem statement in the wider challenge and position yourself (or simply delete if you feel that the paragraph above was already concise enough).³

You could now make the reader yet more convinced about the merit in your topic choice (as all recommendations in this section this is guidance rather than the one-best way of writing-up your ideas). I would recommend to read the merely four pages on which Colquitt and George (2011) discuss the issue of topic choice as this could give you a good idea on whether you might be onto something. I also argue that my own work (Kittler, 2018) has some ideas to offer in how to select a topic that appears relevant to both the academic and also the practitioner community. One short excursus that might be worthwhile here is to illustrate how to use a direct

³ Did you notice that the previous paragraphs appear to be rather long? Fair point. When writing your own work, you may consider to provide the reader with shorter units. While sometimes a paragraph might need to be rather long (or short) think about how paragraphs should carry the structure of your paper but also give the reader some help in following and digesting your work. And as for the previous footnotes also delete all following ones after reading and replace my text in this template with your own text.

quote on something that would help to better “sell” your work to the reader but is quite long (over 40 words). In my view the quote of Colquitt and George (2011, p.432)⁴ is quite helpful for illustration here, suggesting that few topics

“will deal with topics as globally significant as reducing poverty or combating hunger. What [...] submissions can do is deal with large, unresolved problems in a particular literature or area of inquiry and tackle those problems in bold and unconventional way that leaps beyond existing explanations.”⁵ (In case this is helpful for your work with the text processing software, I programmed this text type as Long quote in the format templates of this document. I recommend not changing format manually in the text, but working with templates!)

This section is now vital in “setting the hook” (Grant & Pollock, 2011) and I like their initial admission that a really strong and convincing introduction is rewritten quite a few times until it is considered to satisfy the authors (if it does achieve this target ever) and – more importantly – communicates well with the target audience. By the way, who is *your* target audience? While there usually is no perfect introduction, there still needs to be a first draft and this is the intention of this template, so simply start to write. Do not wait for the magic moment that lets you write the perfect text in on go. I predict that this will be a very long wait. At least it would be for me. With some time available, check Grant and Pollock’s (2011) perspective on research as a product responding to the three sets of questions around (1) who cares, (2) what we know and what we don’t know (i.e. “what theoretical perspectives and empirical findings

⁴ Have you noted? I think I have used reference to Colquitt and George (2011) quite a bit. While technically not a bad thing, you might get to the point where the reader feels you overrely on a single set of sources. This is something you should avoid. I have an apology here that allows me to overuse it at this point. This is not an academic paper. This is merely a template showing you how you could write one. So a bit of a “How to”-text rather than genuine scholarly work. However, if I would write this for journal submission, I would try not to give the reader the impression I overrely on a handful of works which also might suggest that I don’t have “done my reading”.

⁵ Except for such block citations, page numbers and references are usually provided before the fullstop (e.g. Kittler, 2018). P.S. You do delete the footnote in the main text, right? It would make no sense to delete the text at the end of the page but leave the references to the footnotes in the main text. When deleting the reference in the text the footnote text disappears automatically.

have already informed the topic or question”, p.873) and (3) what will we learn? The latter part will follow up the aim of the research but before that, we should probably convince the reader of the relevance of our topic or question, anticipating the “So what?”-question possibly raised by examiners or readers anyway. We could do this by briefly discussing relevance to the practitioner and relevance to the scholarly community.

Following the ideas outlined above, it might not be too difficult to reflect on what makes your topic an effective or in my terms a relevant topic. For relevance you might add a paragraph or two highlighting the relevance to the practitioner and then also pointing out the relevance to the scholarly community. The first one, relevance to the practitioner, could be done by highlighting considerations of use, e.g. that the topic is appreciating actionability, explaining interesting situations, showing inconsistencies of current practices, highlighting their consequences, or offering potential for counterintuitive insights (Kittler, 2018).

With the practical relevance captured above, the relevance to the scholarly audience is also vital for a strong introduction. When considering the academic world as a constant debate over what we know and what we don’t know about a specific topic, a contribution is when we learn a bit more on something we didn’t know or didn’t look at it in a similar way before your research. This means that relevance to the scholar could be seen as your (eventually successful but in early stages of research merely assumed to be successful) efforts in extending our frontiers of understanding and contributing to knowledge, e.g., by

- addressing gaps or limitations of prior research,
- changing, challenging, or advancing understanding, and/or
- creating, destructing or shifting consensus.

The relevance to the scholarly community could be added by reference to key papers or seminal work, theoretical perspectives and/or most recent empirical insights associated with research responding to the problem/topic addressed above telling the reader what prior work has achieved and what still needs to or could be done. Linking your argument to the literature in an early paragraph would benefit from cross-references within the paper to underpin your argument with evidence but without making the text too long and clunky (e.g. “see in more detail the discussion on X in chapter Y/ the main body/ page Z”)⁶

Now that the reader is convinced that the topic you raised is important and relevant to study, it will be important to clarify the overall aim of the research in your paper and introduce more narrow research objectives and/or research questions. The overall aim of this paper is to understand how an academic paper should be designed to find acceptance within the community of business and management scholars. More specifically, this paper will (1) identify what key components are expected in a scholarly publication and why, (2) help you to understand how these components are typically structured and communicated, and (3) illustrate how consistency in format and citations can be achieved. In this paper with a more instructive rather than research intention, of course the objectives could be seen as ‘learning outcomes’ than as research objectives but I’m sure you get the basic idea of pointing out what your paper sets out to achieve in this very important paragraph of your paper. Reflecting on this, a good exercise is to look at works within your area of interest and get a feel for how they address research gaps and – look very specifically for this – how they communicate what they want to research. Possibly create

⁶ This could be nicely done with captions in your text-processing software, also when embedding reference to tables or figures in the text. Without using this automation, I would always be wary of using page numbers (or table or figure numbers) in an early draft as revisions of text or format usually make the initial numbering obsolete and gives room for errors in the final manuscript.

a table with typical aims, objectives, and/or research questions taken from 5-10 papers that take a similar direction or pursue objectives related to what you have in mind.

Particularly when writing a literature review, look at the aims, objectives, and/or research questions in literature reviews coming as close as possible to your own potential topic. Identifying them will also enhance your understanding in the topic area. If you find works doing exactly what you plan to do, revisit your topic choice as you might then have little to contribute to knowledge unless you apply another theoretical lens, examine a phenomenon in a different context or find another explanation on how your work makes a contribution that others do not make. For instance, within a PhD, if a published literature review nicely captures the research in your area, but is over 5 years old, there might still be room to contribute. This could be done by synthesizing the research following the published review you see as identical to what you had in mind. Your work could link to the previous publication and illustrate what is new, query what has happened over these past years, inquire whether there is new evidence, or identify a shift in paradigm, new theoretical perspectives, the destruction of existing consensus or the creation of consensus where there was disagreement before. All these insights might be potential areas for contribution.

Following the section above telling the reader what you plan to do, usually papers contain a short section on how you plan to do it and how the remainder of the paper is structured. This section usually should well engage with the actual content of a paper and not merely say “after this introduction, there will be a main body and a conclusion”, but rather guide the reader through the structural logic of your paper and create an anticipation for what is going to happen in the following sections. When you write what is going to happen in your paper in the early stages of your work, I find this a great exercise to advance your thinking, because you have to plan the manuscript and once this is done, the whole task of writing a paper becomes far less

‘daunting’. I would now reflect on what you plan to do in the paper’s main body. Think about (and then report) on how you plan do your research, about the anticipated findings and contributions you make and how and (most important in this section) where in the paper. While this part is on the structure of your work, fill the structural grid by illustrating it with context-specific insights, e.g. what theoretical explanations are used, what empirical studies exist and how much of the gap is likely to be filled. Many studies typically finish on highlighting key findings or insights in a conclusion chapter also not omitting but rather openly discussing (but usually also excusing) potential limitations and revisiting the “So what?” question stressing the contributions made to both the practitioner and the scholarly community, inviting further research that seems a consequence of the research conducted in your paper. If you struggle with this paragraph, simply write something very simple like “This paper is structured as follows. Firstly,…” This is not highly original but does a good job in the early stage of a manuscript with room for improvement in future revisions. Reflect on your paper’s structure and write it up before you delete the remaining bits of my text in this (for instructive reasons rather lengthy) introduction chapter, making it your own (possibly shorter, topic-specific) introduction.

MAIN BODY (CHANGE THIS TO TOPIC SPECIFIC HEADING)

Starting the main body, there is room to pick up the ball from the structural guidance at the end of the introduction chapter and dive into the topic. Firstly, change the heading to something that is better capturing what happens in the main body of your work than merely calling it “main body”. You could consider the essence of your topic in one line or, as an alternative, use a different system, where you ‘upgrade’ the second level headings in the main body to first level. In this alternative approach, the heading could initially be called “Literature Review” (if this is what you plan to report here. However, I would also see “literature review” more as a working title and adjust to a heading that is more concise in relation to your specific topic. In the case

where the full paper is a literature review, you could possibly provide an overview on the key works, position some key definitions and eventually narrow down to what specific aspects your review will look at more closely. This is a place to give the reader a brief orientation where your work sits in the bigger picture⁷ and where you can highlight areas that are central to the topic but do not need a more specific introduction or separate subchapters as they sit outside the actual focus of the paper.

In the context of this paper (being about crafting an academic paper), it might for instance be a good idea to talk about different types of papers, distinguishing empirical and conceptual papers (or even theoretical papers, for a differentiation see e.g. Shapira, 2011). I could now narrow further down with the idea to categorize the literature review as a paper that might sit between both categories depending on the aim of your paper. If I use the literature to inform and develop a frameworks that helps organizing observations from the literature by making sense of a field and understanding its boundaries, the major findings of prior research, and persisting challenges, we could see the literature review paper more on the conceptual side. However, we could also claim that a literature review is not too dissimilar from an empirical paper if we treat the literature as data collected for and rigorously analyzed within our study. So a literature review could be seen as a hybrid format. It depends on the aim you propose whether it would sit closer to a conceptual paper type or if it will be following similar analytical procedures as empirical papers (e.g. containing a section on research design and methods of

⁷ In some instances, it might be easier to position your work if you also tell the reader what your work will not do. Writing what your work will focus on and what it will not focus on could be helpful in making the reader understand what will happen in your paper. I see this quite often and those negative definitions can be quite helpful. The danger is that students spend too much space, time and effort in this area. For instance, if you tell the reader that your work on recent explanations for firms gaining competitive advantages will exclude the more traditional lens of the resource based view (RBV), you might still refer to Barney (1991). You could for instance tell the reader that this is because your work will look beyond resources as bundles of firm attributes serving to implement their strategies (that additionally are rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable) and justify the exclusion from your work. However, remain wary of diverting too far from the actual scope of your research e.g. by using examples you found in relation to the RBV for something that will not play a role in the remainder of the paper. The reader might then ask why there is this information and might be less able to follow the actual direction of your paper. It can be quite tempting to present information that you already have, but it will be important for bit you include to think why this is needed in the first place. While there seems to be ample manuscript space at the begin of your writing and possibly an anxiety whether the pages will be eventually filled this should not pave way to include details that are not required to respond to your research questions or to meet your research objective.

data collection and analyses). When considering literature as the “data” of your study, you might again distinguish whether this will ask for a structure more typical for qualitative papers (when analyzing the literature in systematic reviews) or for quantitative papers (when conducting meta-analyses on mainly quantitative empirical studies condensing the results across these works). I could now finish this paragraph with some additional guidance to the reader and position the paper flow by informing you that the remainder of this chapter will tell us more about systematic review in the remaining paragraphs of this chapter

This would now start to look at key ideas of reviews, often referring to guidance found in the work of Denyer, Tranfield, and Smart (2003). For a more recent paper on systematically reviewing the literature, I would also point at the work of some of my former colleagues providing a well-organized overview on systematic approaches to existing evidence (Siddaway, Wood, & Hedges, 2019). For a quick read I also think that it is not a bad idea to have a look at Short (2009) and his neat “checklist” on ‘ideal’ and ‘less than ideal’ reviews.

While this chapter was mainly about positioning the literature review as possible research paper and something you are likely to report in your academic work, this was certainly just meant as an example that fits with the topic of this paper template. I now encourage you to again delete my paragraphs in this chapter and replace it with your own work. What are key theories and concepts that are pivotal to your research, what are seminal empirical works and/or what is the lens that you will use to find out more about the topic you are interested in according to the introduction? The answer to these questions would make this chapter usually a bit longer and would expand it by a few paragraphs compared to the length of this chapter in my paper. At the end of this chapter, you could also narrow down your own research question a bit further or clarify what your paper intends to find out and how – blending over to the next chapter – the methods in how you intend to do so.

METHOD

This is the bit where you need to report how you (plan to) come to conclusions in relation to your research question. The best guidance in my view is to look at previous works in the area pursuing a similar method as the one you have in mind to guide your own data collection and analytical procedures. How do these works report this section. Do not plagiarize, but get a feel for how others report similar approaches to your intended work. If your reporting becomes rather similar to these works, it might be a good idea to inform the reader: “Similar to the approach used by Faeth and Kittler (2020) this study uses ...” or “This study will adopt the approach taken by Faeth and Kittler (2020) ...”. If doing this also point out potential differences, e.g. “However, regarding the regional context, this paper looks at...”. For the task to review the literature on a specific topic, I recommend to look at existing systematic reviews in your area and then adopt their way of reporting (also giving credit to the papers via adequate in-text referencing). In this brief guide I take examples from my own prior work and – for the intention to guide your writing rather than reporting my own research in this paper template might bend the rules of consistent referencing as otherwise the following section would contain a few more direct quotations from Faeth and Kittler (2020). The next paragraph begins how we started to introduce our method of a systematic literature in a recent review paper.

For a rigorous review, the paper followed a three-stage approach suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003). In the planning stage a review panel was formed. Its members (refer to appendix and provide a list of participants and also record what you did and when) carried out an iterative process of scoping the literature⁸. Thereby, the research objectives, the research question and

⁸ Of course you can conduct a first draft of a review entirely by yourself. However, if you plan to publish your work, it might be a good idea to organize meetings with colleagues or to use some joint spare time around doctoral seminars (or simply ask like-minded researchers to spend a bit of time for an online-exchange with you) to discuss where your work could go and how you plan to do it. Feedback in early stages of your work are important, but this also suggests that you do actually write a first draft you can share and discuss to collect meaningful feedback.

inclusion and exclusion criteria were established, as well as a concise review protocol. A comprehensive search aimed to identify all relevant studies, within the boundaries of the inclusion criteria that investigated the impact of a) XXX1 or b) XXX2 or c) XXX3 on d) YYY. This objective is reflected in the overall review question: ZZZ (of course the Xs, Ys and Zs will be yours and should refer to your own question(s), the ones you intend to answer in this review.

In order to conduct the review, appropriate keywords and search strings were derived from the scoping search, resulting in ## keywords in total. Clustered into ## subgroups, these keywords yielded in ## possible keyword combinations for which titles, abstracts and subject terms of documents were searched (see Table 1⁹). Here you can now add a table caption in word and a cross-reference in the text. Also ensure that your table is 100% of the text width (or if you decide for another setting use this consistently for the tables you present). The table below is just for the sake of an example how it could be inserted and look like.

Table 1
Clusters and keywords informing the search strings

Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Keyword 1-1	Keyword 2-1
Keyword 1-2	Keyword 2-2
Keyword 1-3	

Legend providing additional information to understand materials in the table. Possibly adding a source if from a third party, e.g. Kittler (2018).

I would always recommend creating such tables from scratch in the main document or duplicate a table that is clearly build on the existing template. I would not try to copy and paste

⁹ Highlight this section and the table caption and you will see that this is a field which remains active also when repositioning it in the document. This means table and figure numbers in the text can be automatically updated which saves a lot of manual nitpicking in later stages of your manuscript development. If you are not yet familiar with these active format elements, you might better invest a bit of time in order to check how to work with such cross-references and captions in your text-processing software. While it usually also works to cut and paste these format elements in the document, it might make your life in future research efforts a lot easier if you develop your command of your text-processor – no matter what type or make you use.

such elements from other work as this will often create conflicts with your template and could keep looking quite awkward to the reader. Do not use tables that you cut and pasted as graphic images (e.g. from a screenshot unless your intention is to illustrate the screenshot which then however would be introduced as a figure even though it might show a table). If you are uncertain about all these format aspects and keen to keep your format pure, you could also indicate the position of tables and figures like the note in the text below and put all your tables and figures in an appendix document.

===
Insert Table 1 around here
===

The example above is not unusual but makes it in my view harder to work with captions and cross-references – and also to follow the paper, but easier to format tables and figures outside the main document. The above procedure is usually recommended for manuscript submissions in many leading management journals such as the Academy of Management Journal (AMJ). It might be helpful to look at the AMJ styleguide (2014, p.2, using the template for long quotes for the second time in this manuscript), suggesting the following:

“Tables should be formatted as follows. Arrange the data so that columns of like material read down, not across. The headings should be sufficiently clear so that the meaning of the data is understandable without reference to the text. Tables should have titles and sufficient experimental detail in a legend immediately following the title to be understandable without reference to the text. Each column in a table must have a heading, and abbreviations, when necessary, should be defined in the legend or footnote. Number tables and figures consecutively (one series for tables, one for figures). [...] Each table or figure needs an introductory sentence [at least one] in your text.”

In MONTH YEAR, the libraries of the following online data bases XXX, YYY, and ZZZ¹⁰ were systematically searched for relevant documents. Titles, abstracts and subject terms that met the inclusion criteria were transferred to the reference management software 'endnotes'¹¹. To be considered for further analysis, the studies had to meet a set of inclusion criteria. They had to be (1) peer-reviewed articles, (2) in English language, (3) with full text available (including requested articles), (4) published/accessible at DATE YEAR, (5) focussing on YOUR TOPIC, and (6) investigating the impact of XXX or YYY on ZZZ.

The initial search resulted in XXX records of which YYY records had to be dismissed. Reasons for excluding papers were that they were (1) non peer-reviewed articles (n = aaa), (2) not in English (n = bbb), (3) not investigating the XXX/YYYY/ZZZ (n = ccc), or (4) generally had no relation to YOUR TOPIC (n=ddd). Further reasons for exclusion were OTHER REASONS. This resulted in the eligibility of n = xxx records, after also removing duplicates. As suggested by Thorpe et al. (2005), the authors set up a relevance assessment in 'endnotes' to organize further analysis and separated all transferred records into an A, B and C list. The A list comprised of HERE DISCUSS WHAT YOU DID. All records in the A and B list were retrieved for more detailed evaluation (full text), resulting in some records moving into the A list and vice versa. The manual analysis ended up with zz relevant articles in the A list.

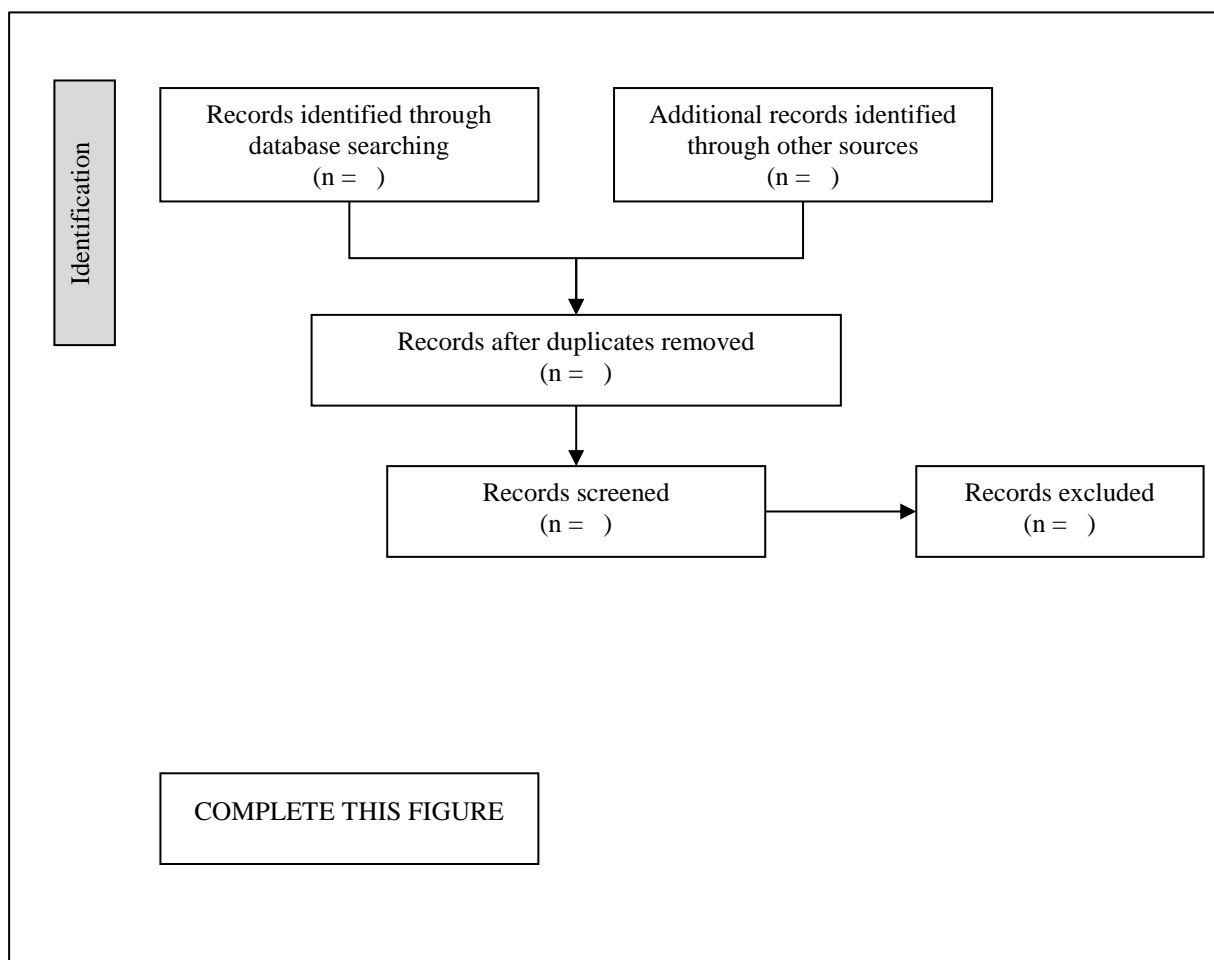
To enhance rigor in the literature review and reduce the omission of relevant work, a group of academics relevant to this research area was contacted for comment and asked to provide a list of what they would consider influential works in the field of YOUR TOPIC. The previous

¹⁰ I would choose databases that fit with the topic you plan to research. Usually you will find search engines like Scopus, Web of Knowledge, or EBSCO prominent for business and management research. Increasingly, scholar.google is gaining popularity but is criticized for not fully disclosing its search mechanism and sources it does access. Hence, scholars criticize this search engine for not being able to fully explain how they got to their results. So depending on the plans you have with your systematic review, you should discuss with your supervisors, peers and/or co-authors where to search.

¹¹ You might also think about using NVivo which is gaining popularity for qualitative analyses of extant literature.

text is just an example on how to report how you got to the literature for your analysis. You could add more specific details on your search procedures. Many scholars use (and of course cite) Moher et al. (2009) or its more recent updates. If you now think “Ahh, PRISMA”, you are already in a systematic review mind. If you think “Who are Moher et al?”, have a quick look in your search engine and also check how frequently the work by David Moher and his colleagues is cited. You might then see that the preferred reporting items might give good guidance you could also follow in your own work and you will also find out, that quite a few authors of systematic review papers have adopted their suggested procedures. There is a nice example on how this then looks in Figure 1.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow chart



Source: Moher et al. (2009)

As for the tables, you will also need at least one sentence introducing your figures in the text. Again, I would recommend working with captions and cross-references. You could for instance simply state that Figure 1 illustrates the process of identifying the xx papers included in your review. For getting accustomed with the in my view awkward way of working with figures in word, I leave the flowchart for you to complete in this drawing canvas. The following comment relates to a common issue where I see room to improve in many submissions I receive. There are quite a few authors inserting shapes in word outside a drawing canvas, not making use of connecting arrows and not using the layout options boxes (right click on your shapes) which then might massively spoil the way your document looks when some shapes move with the text and others don't. While I am far from being an expert at using word myself, this is what I definitely would advise to learn how to do (or find out about equivalent steps required in other text-processing software).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After having informed the reader on your review design and on what materials you have found and included in your review, the toughest bit is to synthesize your findings. You will need to condense your findings rather than only sequentially report them. The latter should only be a first step. This might be done by collecting the data and (unless the number of papers is rather high) providing a table with the papers analysed and some possible criteria for a first distinction of your findings. A typical first overview could look like what I present in Table 2¹²

¹² Bear in mind that you need to insert the caption first before you can cross-reference to it. Check the tool for cross-referencing as you will also be able to refer the reader to specific pages or also sections in your headings if you use templates with adequately formatted headings or (in later more comprehensive submissions) also numbered headings. Using cross-references meaningfully will make structural links within your document better visible and will keep them more resistant to omissions when the document is revised as flaws like links to missing tables in the text or to sections that have been removed usually can be easily spotted, even in a rather superficial proofread.

Table 2
Studies included in this review

Author(s) A-Z	Year	Type of study ¹	Theoretical lens ²	Sample ³
Authors 1	2016	QUAL	RBV	28 managers in a US based MNC
Author 2	2018	CT	INST	N/A
Author 3	2004	QUANT	RBV, INST	221 German R&D managers
Authors 4	2015	QUANT	N/A (unclear)	...
...				
Author n

Legend: ¹C/T = Conceptual paper, QUANT = Quantitative study, QUAL = Qualitative study; ²INST = Institutional theory, RBV = Resource based view, MODIFY AND EXPAND THIS TO FIT YOUR WORK; ³Only for empirical papers.

Usually, you will cite the papers shown in Table 2 also in your reference list. Often in systematic reviews, these papers are included with an asterisk in the reference list, showing that they were the ones resulting from your search and applied filters. Depending on how you plan to present your findings, you might work with some or all of the papers in your review. Sometimes it might be a good idea to number the papers in Table 2 and then add numbers to the characteristics or findings you report. This is done to inform the reader from which papers you draw these conclusions (e.g., quoting “(1, 2, 4)”, rather than parentheses with lengthy quotations). While this is quite a bit of work, it does add transparency to your work, which might be helpful for the reader, but also for yourself. This might prove particularly worthwhile when revising the work at a later stage. This is particularly helpful when your number of studies will not allow keeping a comprehensive overview of all papers in your mind while working.

The discussion of your findings should certainly be guided by the initial objectives of your research. Additionally, it should link back (and possibly cross-reference) to the earlier literature chapter. This will help to identify where there is consensus with extant research or where we have changed our previous understanding of a phenomenon. It might also illustrate conflicting findings and identify the need for additional (empirical) research.

CONCLUSION

After presenting your findings, providing a synopsis or identifying a pattern in the literature (or the data in an empirical paper), the conclusion is meant to highlight the key insights of your research as well as their consequences. A simple start into the conclusion section is a short link to the introduction and the initial idea of your research (“The overall aim of this paper was to ...”). Following what you did intend to achieve, you then should highlight the key findings in response to your objectives. I aimed to enhance your understanding on how an academic paper should be designed (I am closing the loop to the introduction here). I used the example of a systematic literature review to illustrate how a paper could be crafted and developed a template you could use quite easily to replace the paragraphs containing my advice with your own ideas.

In the context of a genuine research paper we would probably add an additional bit that is more specific in highlighting results of our research and/or insights stemming from our data. In the context of this paper I would condense key issues illustrated above that I see challenging for many who are new to academic writing. The underlying message that you will have noticed is that to craft an academic paper successfully an important antecedent is to start writing. It is similarly important to start reading and developing a good sense of what we know, what we do not know and where to look to find out about that (e.g. using a systematic approach to reviewing literature). You might also have learned that you should develop a good command of the “tools” you use in the research process, your bibliographic databases and your text processing software.

After telling the reader about how you contribute to our understanding of the subject under study you usually also remind us about limitations the study might have. “Doesn’t it make my research look poor when I tell the reader about its shortcomings?” you may ask and feel tempted to omit that your study has limitations. However, documenting trustworthiness and being clear

about limitations (as long as they can be justified and are not a result of a researcher's laziness) is usually seen as an important ingredient of 'good' research. You might follow up the idea of research goodness highlighted by Morrow (2005)¹³. For limitations, it is not a bad idea to inform the reader that they exist but also explain why they might be inevitable and/or not highly problematic. For instance, we could admit a file-drawer bias in our review but also suggest that we reduced this potential limitation by engaging with experts in the field, allowing them to comment on our findings and inform us about influential works missing in our results. We could also refer readers to well-published or cited work sharing similar limitations.

Once the limitations are discussed, it makes good sense to not leave the reader on a weak impression of your work but argue that "Despite these limitations, this research contributes...". Starting your penultimate paragraph with some contributions relevant to practitioners will leave the reader more likely to remember the positives of your research. I could pick up the ball from the introduction and point at how discussing challenges towards dissemination of new knowledge and providing advice might improve the chances for newcomers getting published.

The contribution to the scholarly community will be about how much of the gap identified above has been narrowed by this research. What is the new knowledge? What has been answered and what remains to be found out? This is associated with implications for future research. These should not be merely a very generic "More research is generally needed..." but be clearly derived from what your study has achieved (and what it did not achieve). Now start to write and good luck with your future research. All the best! Markus Kittler (MCI).

¹³ This is just to remind us that your readers could see it critical if you introduce completely new ideas in a conclusion. While I really do like this Morrow (2005) paper on research quality, I should have highlighted this earlier in the paper rather than introducing it out of nowhere in one of the last paragraphs of my work. I think that on this occasion we could consider the novel reference this late in this paper to be acceptable as it does not divert our attention outside the paper's initial scope and remains more of a side note. However, if you have read this far, you might also find it rewarding that I guide you to the appendix of this paper which contains very helpful recommendations for conducting and writing qualitative research. Ideas you can also easily transfer into a format template like this one.

REFERENCES

AMJ (2014) Style guide for authors. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(5), 1-4.

*¹⁴Author 1 (2016)

*Author 2 (2018)

*Author 3 (2004)

*Author 4 (2015)

*Author n (2009)

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99-120.

Colquitt, J. A., & George, G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ - Part 1: topic choice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 432-435.

Faeth, P., & Kittler, M. (2020) Expatriate management in hostile environments from a multi-stakeholder perspective - a systematic review. *Journal of Global Mobility* (forthcoming).

Grant, A. M., & Pollock, T. G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ- Part 3: setting the hook. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5), 873-879.

Kittler, M. (2018). Do we understand each other? Discussing academic exchange from a cross-cultural communication perspective. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 48(3), 333-351.

¹⁴ It might be simplest to add the asterisks manually after the reference list is generated and finally formatted and sorted A-Z. Of course all my sources in this text sit next to each other as they all are called Author but with real names they are usually distributed across the reference list. Apart from the hypothetical authors 1-n, I tried to stick quite consistently with APA, with at least one (small) inconsistency. If you enjoy spotting such formal errors, possibly check the APA manual and have a look. If you are conscious about your time, we could both agree that the reference list seems roughly OK and should possibly survive a first submission.

- Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853-886.
- Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 151(4), 264-269.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260.
- Rattrie, L. T., Kittler, M. G., & Paul, K. I. (2020). Culture, Burnout, and Engagement: A Meta-Analysis on National Cultural Values as Moderators in JD-R Theory. *Applied Psychology*, 69(1), 176-220.
- Shapira, Z. (2011). "I've got a theory paper—Do you?": Conceptual, empirical, and theoretical contributions to knowledge in the organizational sciences. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1312-1321.
- Short, J. (2009). The art of writing a review article. *Journal of Management*, 35(6), 1312-1317.
- Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2019). How to do a systematic review: a best practice guide for conducting and reporting narrative reviews, meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 747-770.
- ¹⁵Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14(3), 207-222.

*Studies included in the systematic review results

¹⁵ Before Tranfield et al. (2003), we miss Thorpe et al. (2005). This source is cited in text but is missing in the above reference list. Particularly if you are not using a referencing software, make sure that you have full consistency between what you reference in text and what you present in your reference list. Just for the record, a missing source here is Thorpe, R., Holt, R., Macpherson, A., & Pittaway, L. (2005). Using knowledge within small and medium-sized firms: A systematic review of the evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 7(4), 257-281.