

Case Background / Writing

We'll start today by continuing to take questions about the case in progress. Remember that the goal will be to understand the background and study details well enough to write 3–5 sentences describing each, so take good notes! As your group arrives, review with each other what you've learned so far, and discuss what questions you still want to ask.

Again, here's the initial information you got. "I'm a veterinary student studying coagulation abnormalities in dogs with septic peritonitis. Can you tell me what my sample size should be? Thanks."

Drafting: Background and Goals

Drafting: Study Design and Data

We'll try using the writing process (planning/drafting/revising/editing) today to start writing a collaboration plan for this case.

Planning Step: Together with your group, do some planning for the following sections for the case study we've been discussing. (Don't draft anything yet!) The goal of each of these sections is twofold: first, to convince your client that you understand the details well enough to be trusted as a collaborator, and second, to have enough information that if you came back later having forgotten everything, you could understand enough to start work again.

Background and Goals: Describe the subject matter background. Why is the research important? What questions should be answered at the end of the study? Describe variables and data only enough to make the context is clear.

Study Design and Data: If have data already, where did the data come from? How was it chosen (sampling plan)? How much data is there? If a designed study, what was the experimental design? Explain what the observational units are and what variables were measured. (If study not performed yet, this will look different; your job may be to help determine these things.)

Revising (Part I)

Here are some principles to keep in mind when revising. They are not hard and fast rules! See <https://cgi.duke.edu/web/sciwriting/> for more details.

Principle 1: Put actions in verbs

Verbs are action words: they describe motion, like to explore, to examine, or to observe. Verbs can be turned into nouns, which changes the word from an action to a thing. This is called a nominalization. Nominalizations are nouns that contain a hidden action. There is nothing inherently wrong with nominalizations, but many scientific writers misuse them by using abstract nouns to convey action. This creates a disconnect between structure and meaning — the intended action is no longer found in the verb. **Most readers expect the main action of a clause to be found in a verb.** If you fail to put your intended action in a verb, your reader must work to determine where the action is. *Revision Technique:* Find the verbs in each sentence of your draft. For each, ask yourself this question: Does this verb capture the action in the sentence?

Surgical techniques for septic peritonitis, a type of contamination within the abdomen, have been subject to different improvements, modifications, and extensions over the years.

Principle 2: Keep subjects near verbs

The two primary pieces of information a reader looks for are 1) who is the sentence about? and 2) what are they doing? When these two pieces of information are far apart, that usually means one of them isn't arriving until the end of the sentence. This confuses readers, because they can't piece together the whole picture without answers to these questions. *Revision Technique:* How far apart are your subjects and verbs? Can you bring them closer together?

In dogs, several important factors, including platelet count, mean platelet volume, platelet distribution width, and platelet crit, affect coagulation.

Name: _____

What planning/prewriting techniques did you use today?

Which revision principle was more interesting or applicable to you? Why?

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