

Writing a Journal Article

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Aim of this session

- By the end of this session, you will have a plan for how write a journal article that has a good chance of being accepted by your target journal

Warmup 1: who is here?

- Are you a:
 - PhD student?
 - Clinical academic?
 - Quantitative researcher?
 - Qualitative researcher?
 - Something else?
- How many first author papers have you written before?
 - None
 - One
 - 2-5
 - >5
- Have you got a paper you are working on now?

Warmup 2: what are your barriers to writing?

Overview – steps to writing a paper

Step 1: The MARKET approach

Step 2: Mind mapping

Step 3: Storyboarding – four key sentences

Step 4: Write a linear plan



Planning

Step 5: Freewriting your first draft



Writing

Step 6: Macro-editing

Step 7: Micro-editing

Step 8: Add the extras

Step 9: Managing co-authors

Step 10: Submission!



Editing

Step 1: the MARKET approach

Message(s)

Audience(s)

Rhetorical moves

Key Journals

Enveloping

Title

Clark A and Sousa B (2018). *How to be a happy academic*. Sage, London.
pages 164-166.

Message

What is your paper's main contribution(s) to the conversation? (about 12-16 words)

Message

What is your paper's main contribution(s) to the conversation? (about 12-16 words)

- Not a question
- Not a title
- Could be the answer to a question/a claim
- Should have a verb
- Include keywords or a 'hook'?

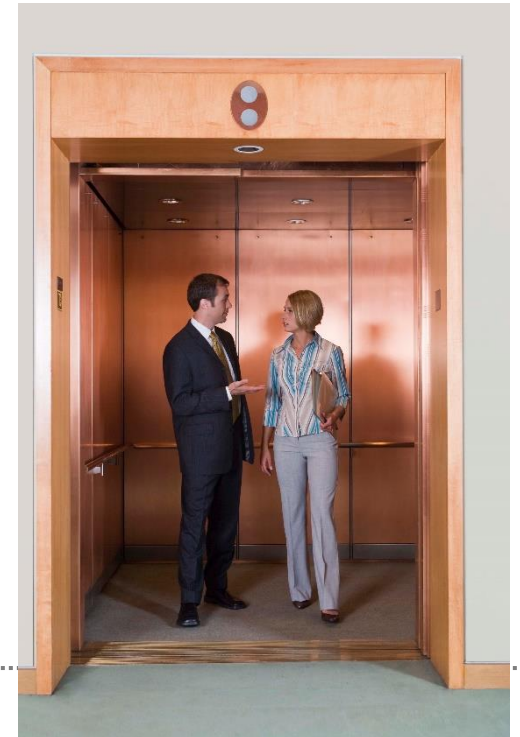
Audience(s)

- Which knowledge community is having the conversation you want to contribute to?
 - Consider who is most appropriate to the message

Rhetorical Moves

- What points justify the paper's contribution?
 - 3-4 points that form the background to your paper
 - Links to the contribution you plan to make
 - Consider your target journal
 - Style and structure

My paper is useful because...



Key journals

- In which journals are these conversations taking place?
 - Focus on finding a journal to match your *message* and *audience*
 - What is the journals scope and aims?
 - What is the readership of the journal?
 - Look for evidence of ‘thread’
 - Find similar articles to yours and read them
 - Check instructions to authors - appropriate format?
 - Costs/open access?
 - Consider impact factor/status of journal
 - Try: <https://jane.biosemantics.org/index.php>

Enveloping

- How are you going to ‘package’/frame the message of your paper?
 - Consider the various ways in which you could choose to envelope the message
 - Select the message most appropriate to your audience

Title

- What title would most engage your key audience and envelopes the contribution to the conversation?
 - Key words
 - 'Hot' topics
 - Journal styles

MARKET statement

The title of my paper will be _____ (T)

It is aimed at _____ (A)

In the journal _____ (K)

The paper is useful because _____ (R)

My paper will _____ (E+M)

T=Title, A=Audience, K=Key journal(s),
R=Rhetorical Moves, E=Enveloping, M=Message

Examples

The title of my paper will be: Raised inflammatory markers as a predictor of one-year mortality: a cohort study in primary care (T)

It is aimed at primary care clinicians and care of the elderly physicians in the journal age and aging (A + K)

The paper will be useful because a range of frailty indices have been developed to predict mortality; none currently use inflammatory markers (R + E)

My paper will show that inflammatory markers are a predictor all cause mortality and may be a useful marker of frailty in primary care (M)

Exercise 1: MARKET approach (small groups)

- Start writing your MARKET statement – focusing on *message* and *audience*
- Share in your small groups

Message (12-16 words) (*What is your paper's main contribution to the conversation*)

Audience (*who is having the conversation you want to contribute to?*)

Rhetorical Moves (*what points do you need to make that leads to your contribution?*)

Key journals (*in which journals are these conversations taking place?*)

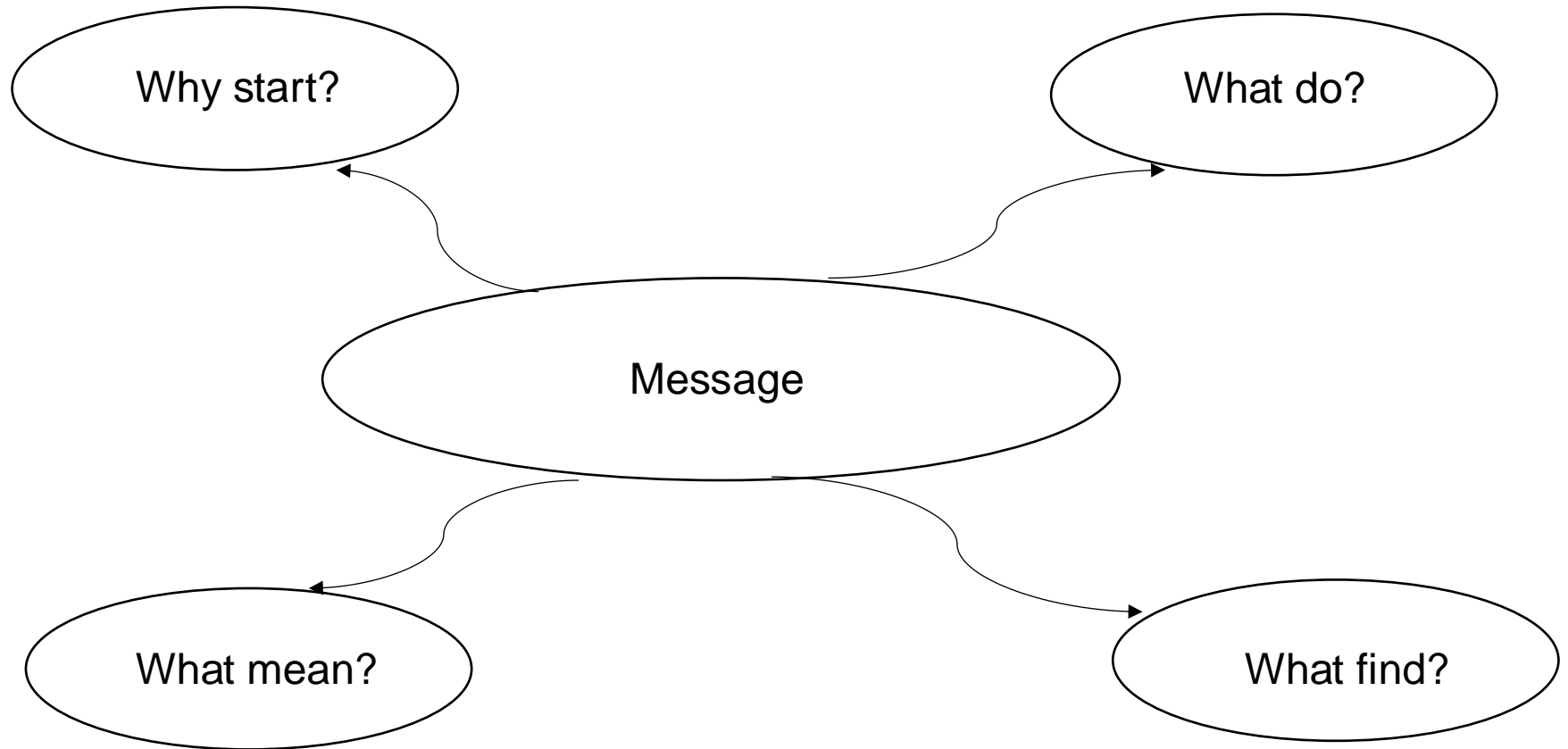
Enveloping (*how are you going to 'package'/frame your message?*)

Title (*what title will best engage your audience?*)

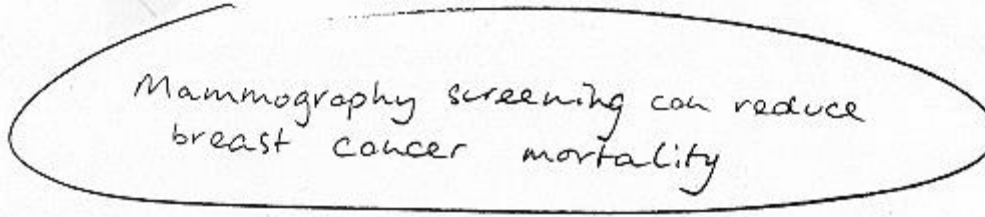
Step 2: Mind mapping

- Message in the middle
- Work outwards
- Keep to one point/word
- Avoid lists
- **Don't worry**

Mind map

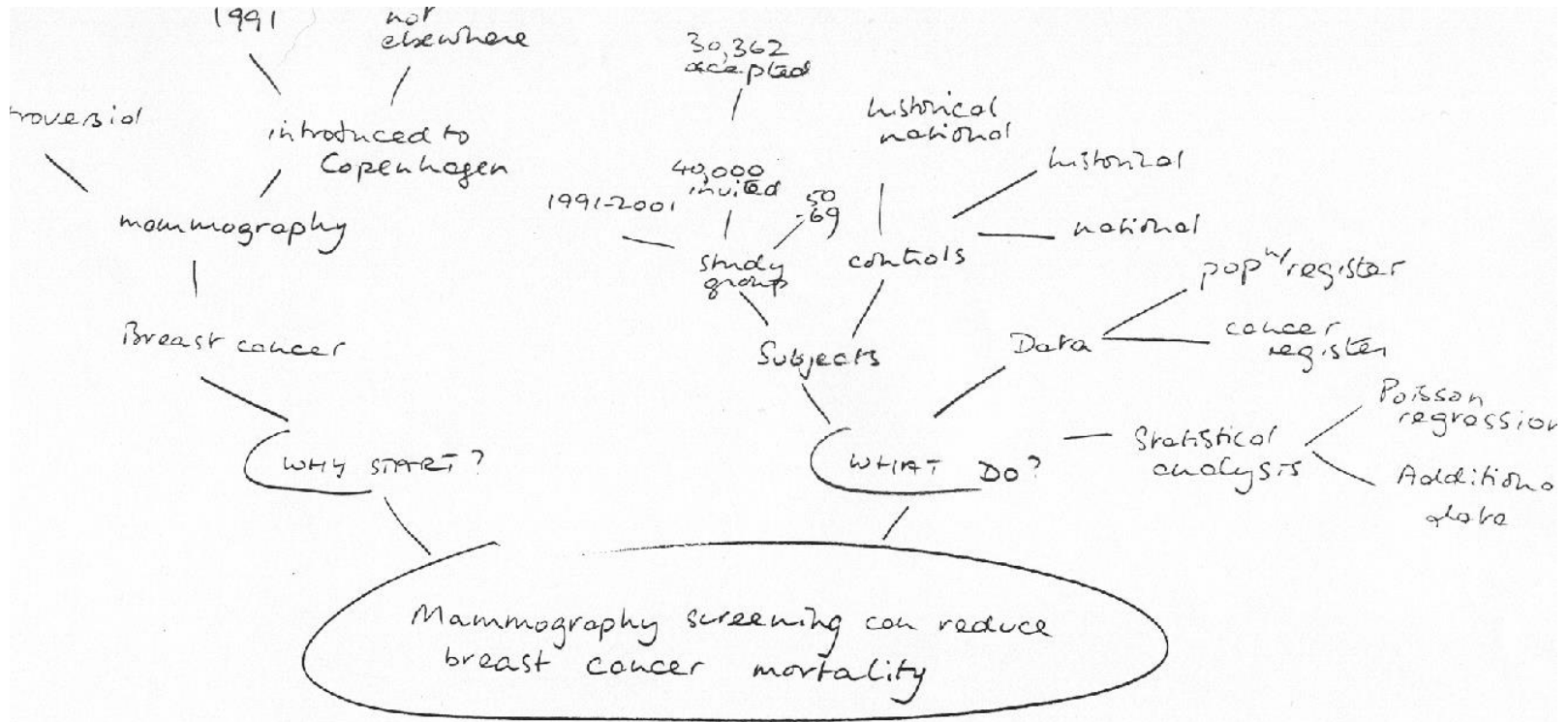


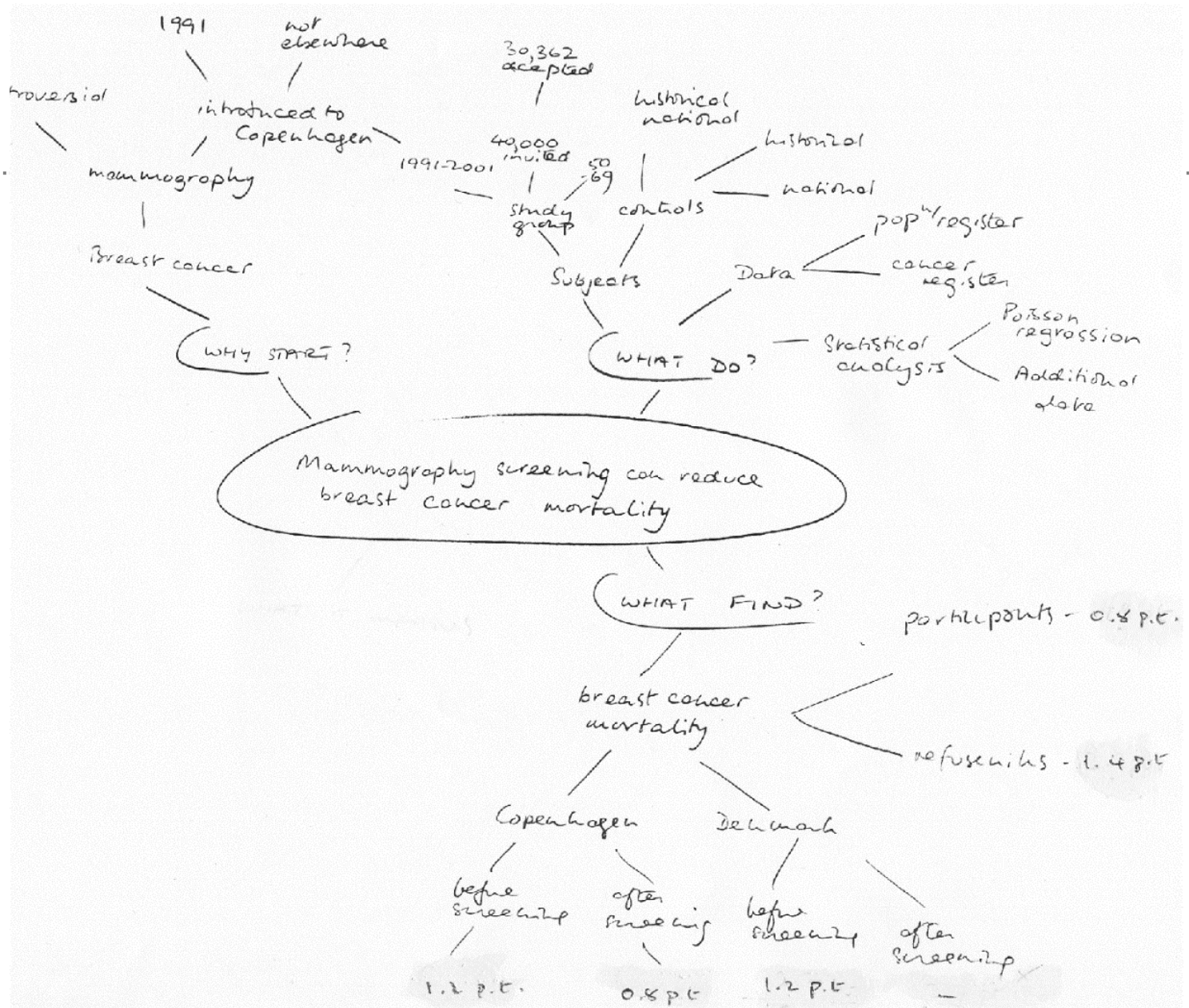
Mind map

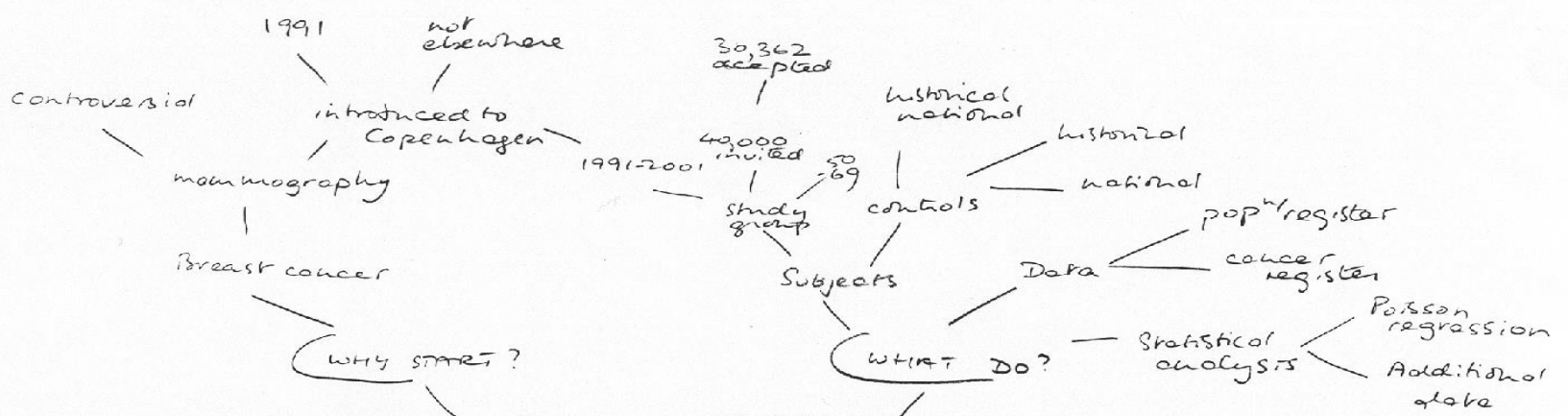


Mammography screening can reduce
breast cancer mortality

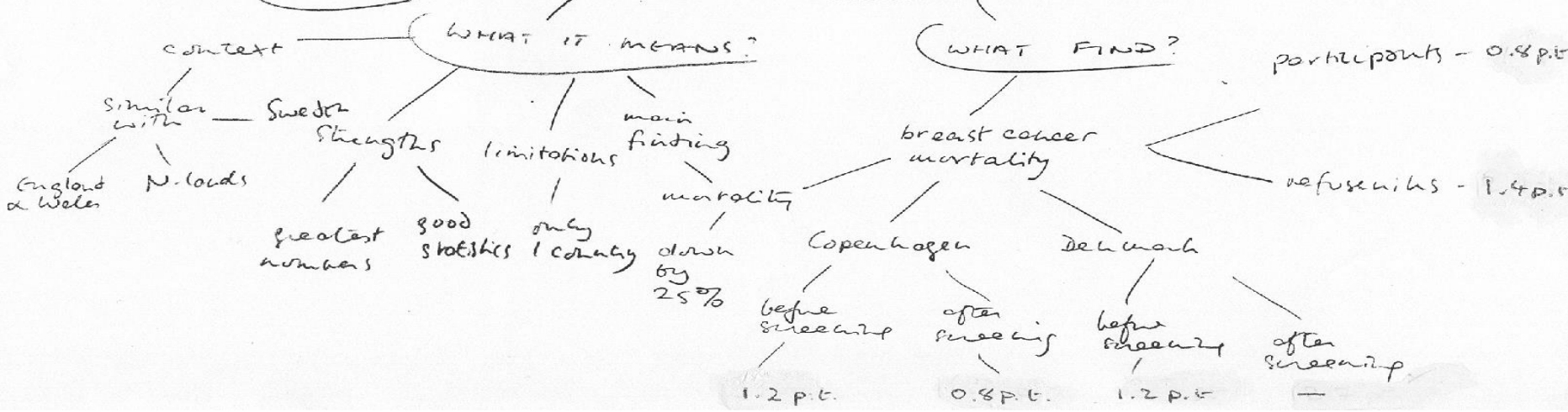
Mind map







So what? **Mammography screening can reduce breast cancer mortality**



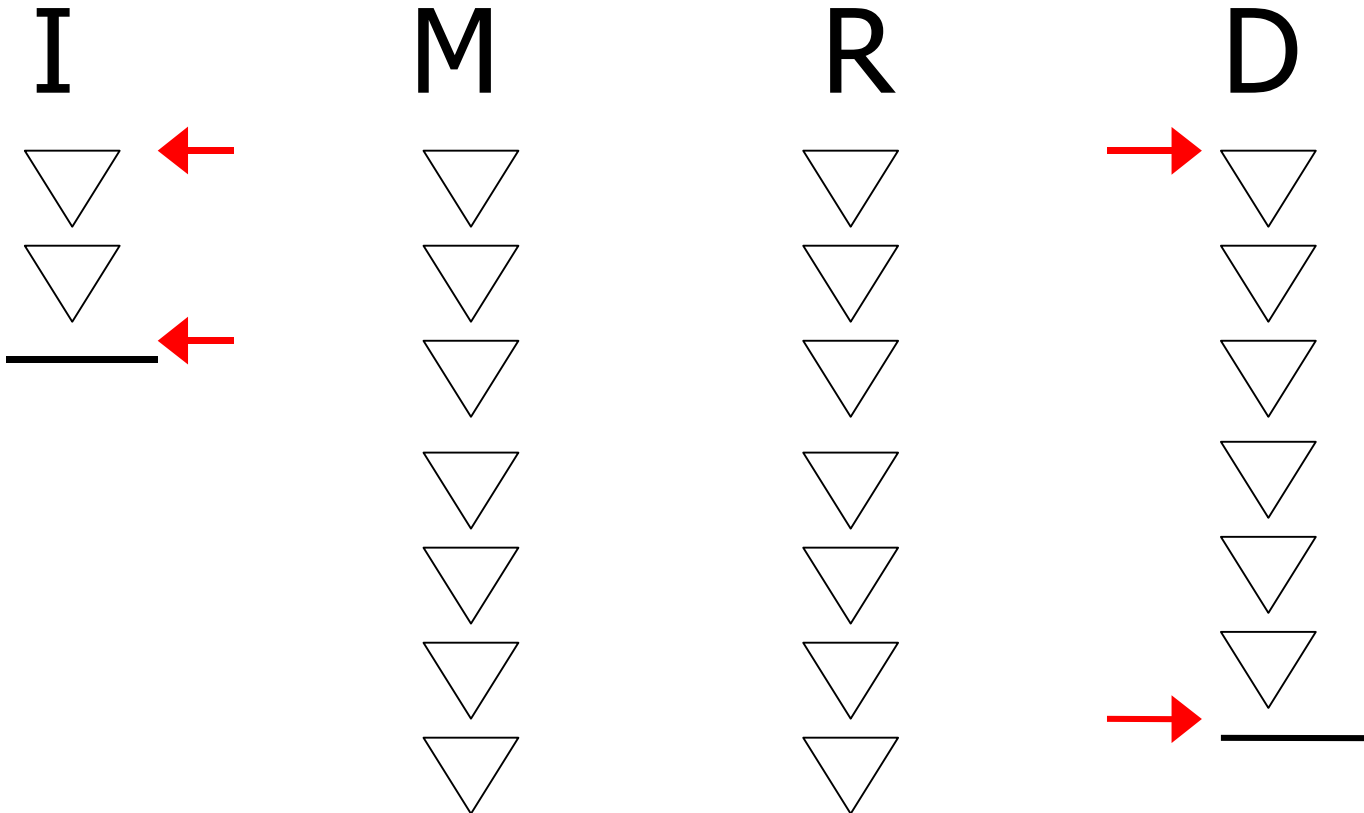


The mess in
my head is
now a mess
on a piece
of paper

Step 3: storyboarding – four key sentences

- Intro sentence 1: what we looked at (why)
- Intro last sentence: what we did
- Discussion sentence 1: what we found
- Discussion last sentence: what it means (message)

Step 3: storyboarding – four key sentences



Storyboarding example 1

- Breast cancer is a major cause of premature mortality
- We looked at results of first 10 years of a screening programme in Copenhagen
- We found breast cancer mortality dropped significantly
- More research is indicated

Storyboarding example 2

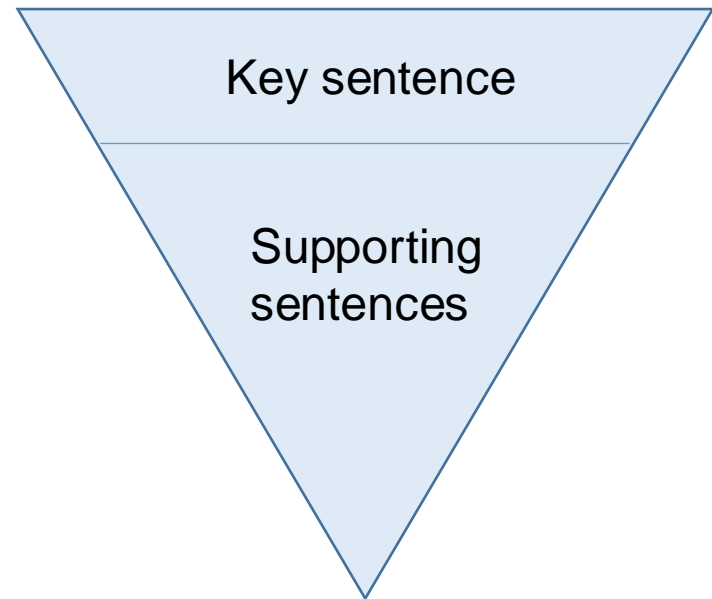
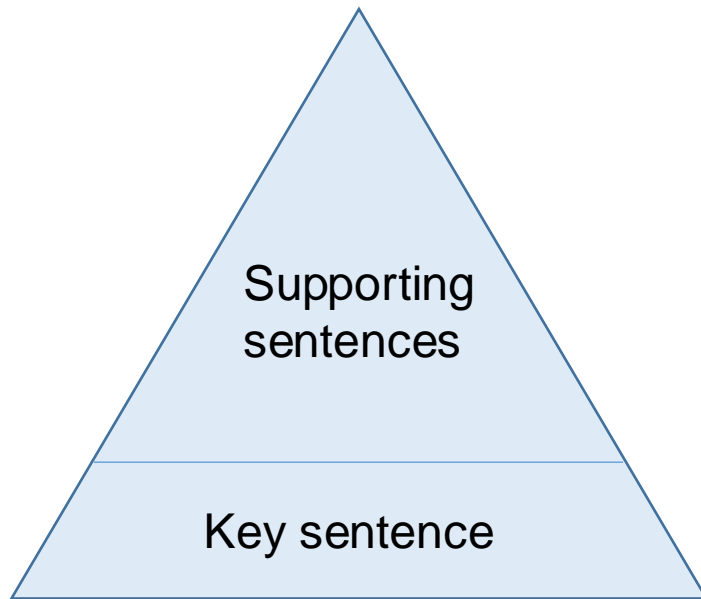
- Mammography screening plays a major part in preventing breast cancer
- We looked at results of first 10 years of a screening programme in Copenhagen
- We found breast cancer mortality dropped significantly
- Screening prevents deaths from breast cancer

Exercise 2: four key sentences (small groups)

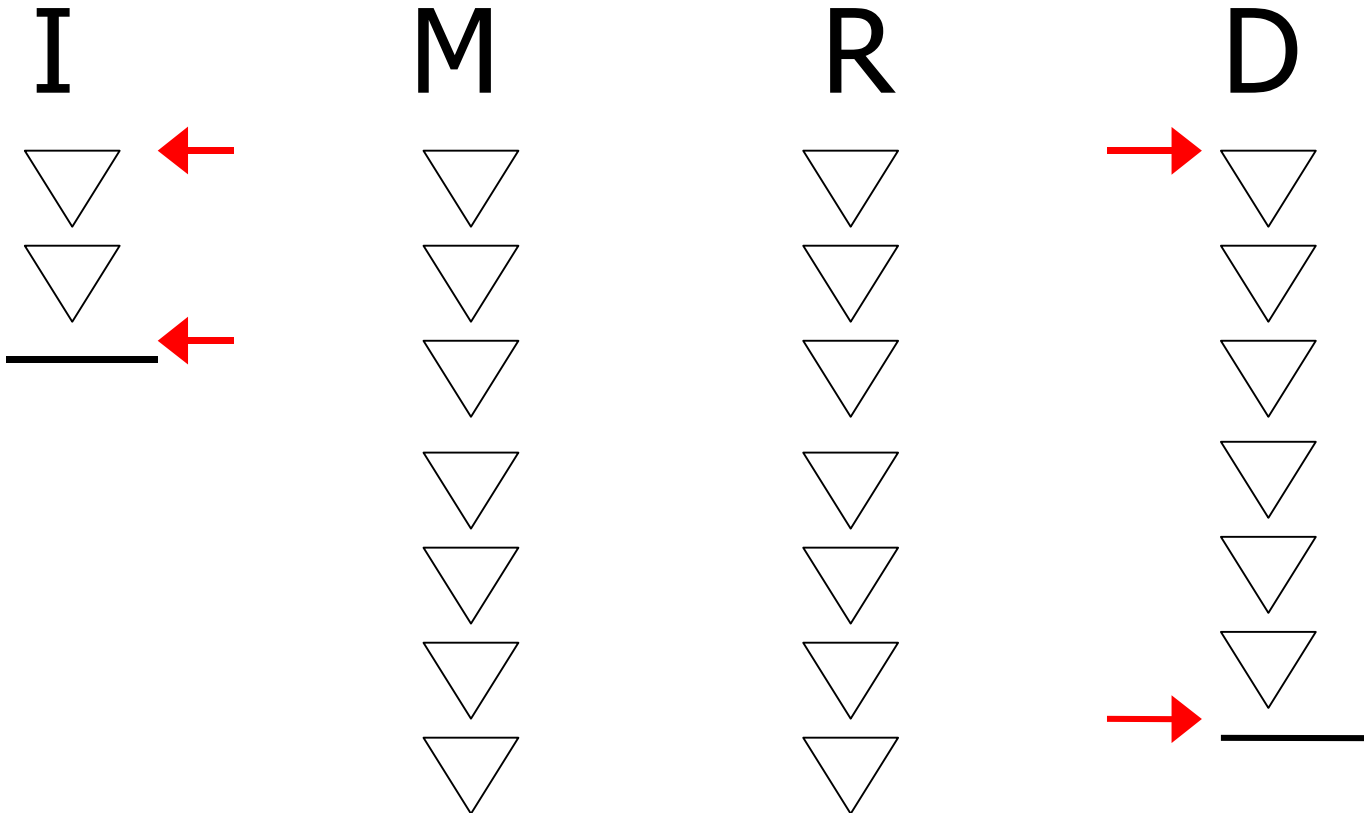
- Try to write at least two of your key sentences and share them in your small groups:
 - Intro sentence 1: what we looked at (why)
 - Intro last sentence: what we did
 - Discussion sentence 1: what we found
 - Discussion last sentence: what it means (message)

Step 4: Write the plan

- Use the paragraph as your building block
- Think of each paragraph as a triangle:



Step 4: write the plan



- The
-

Discussion section

- Some journals require structured subheadings
- For example - BMJ requirements
 - Statement of principal findings
 - Strengths and weaknesses of the study
 - Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies, discussing important differences in results
 - Unanswered questions and future research
 - Meaning of the study: possible explanations and implications for clinicians and policymakers

See: <https://www.bmj.com/content/318/7193/1224>

Step 5: Freewriting your first draft



Don't get it right, just get it written.

(James Thurber)

IZQuotes

Tips for writing your first draft

- Try not to edit your work as you go
- Avoid digital distractions when writing
- Block out regular time for writing
- Figure out what time of day works best for you
- Consider tools eg Pomodoro timer or Forest app to help you focus
- Consider signing up for a writing day or online zoom writing group eg <https://www.szwg.co.uk/>

Step 6: Macro-editing



The secret to editing your work
is simple: you need to become
its reader instead of its writer.

Zadie Smith

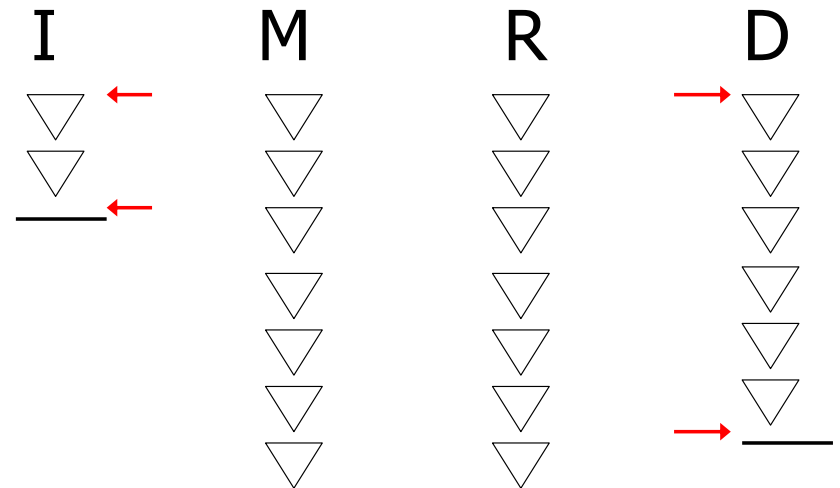
 quoteFancy

Macro-editing 1

- Is there a clear message?
- Is the target audience the right one?
- Is the structure appropriate
 - IMRaD structure – 4 sections
 - Readable paragraphs, and appropriate number (~2-7-7-6)
- Is the tone appropriate
 - Sentence length
 - Appropriate words

Macro-editing 2

- Can you find four key sentences (storyboard)
- Count the number of paragraphs in each section
- Find the key sentence in each paragraph
- Do your paragraphs have more than one idea?
- Compare what you have written with your MARKET statement



Macro-editing 3

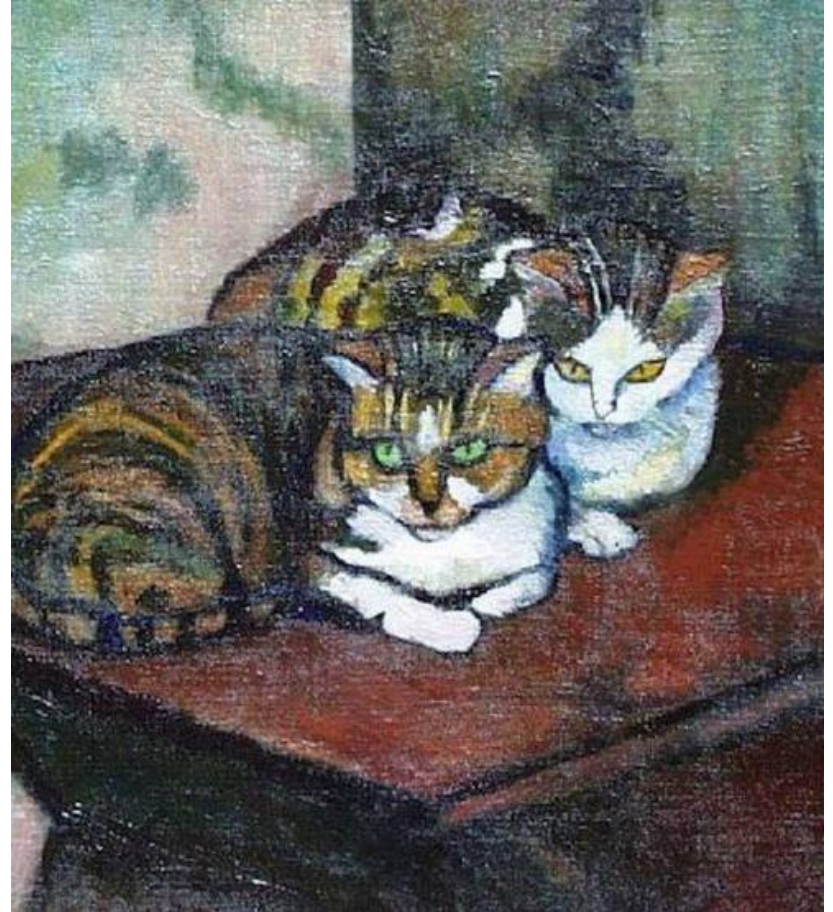
- Have you missed anything important?
 - Check the relevant reporting guidelines:
 - RCTs = CONSORT
 - Observational studies = STROBE
 - Systematic reviews = PRISMA
 - Use <https://www.equator-network.org/> to find other relevant guidelines

Step 7: Micro-editing

- Facts
- Grammar/spelling
- Readability
- Style

Style

- Short sentences
- Active voice (the cat sat on the mat, not the mat was sat on by the cat!)
- Positive statements
- Avoid long words
- Delete redundant words
- **Break these rules if necessary**



Step 8: Add the extras

- Abstract
- References
- Tables
- Title page
- Formatting
- Covering letter to the editor

Re-read the journal's instructions carefully

Abstract

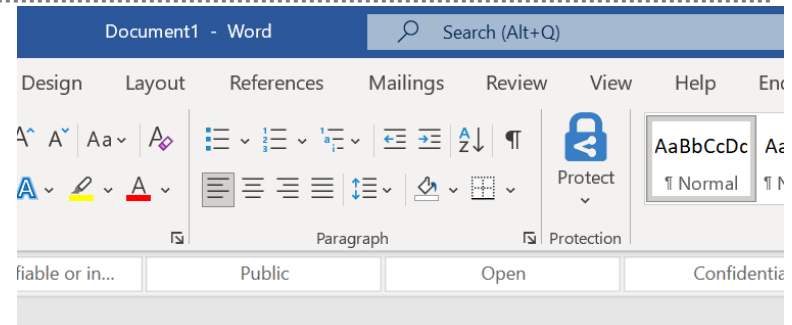
- Follow the style of journal
- Write abstract after you've finished the article
- Message should be in last sentence

Title page

- Check instructions to authors
- Typically title page will include
 - Article title
 - Authors
 - Affiliations
 - Address and email for corresponding author
 - Word counts

Letter to editor

- What is your message?
- Why does it belong in this journal?
- What does it add to the field?
- Plus:
 - Any linked publications/conflicts of interest/pre-prints?
 - Confirm that you have met requirements?



Covering letter

Please publish my article. I really need this. It's good I promise.

Thanks, Jess

Step 9: Managing co-authors

- Set out a timetable
- Do triage on comments
- Be specific in your requests for feedback
- Don't tie yourself in knots trying to please everyone
- Co-authors suggest changes, not corrections

Step 10: send it off

Have an idea
Design study
Get funding

Start research



A long time ...

Paper submitted



A long time ...

Paper published

Suggestion for format of responses

Paper number: Title

REVIEWERS' COMMENTS	RESPONSE
REVIEWER 1	
This is a world class paper and should be published immediately. Your Nobel Prize is overdue.	Thank you for your comment
On page 15 you discuss how dust remediation could help reduced lead exposure for children, but you fail to refer to the seminal paper in this area by Henry et al. (2004).	Thank you for this valuable comment. A reference to the paper on the use of vacuum cleaning that you mention has been added on p. 15, ln 4.
You describe an observational study but you have not included a completed STROBE form or a study participant flow chart.	The completed form has been added as Supplementary Material.

- Highlighting/tracked changes in revised manuscript

Dealing with rejection

- Journal acceptance rates typically about 20% (less for top journals)
- Wrong journal?
- Use reviewers' comments to improve
- Resilience



Accepted



- University repository
- Inform your funder
- Publicity for impact (press release, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Altmetric)

Take home messages

- Use a structured approach to plan your paper **before** writing
- Message is key! Use the MARKET approach to write a pitch and share it with your co-authors
- Use mind mapping techniques to get started
- Write down your four key sentences
- Finally turn your mind map into a linear plan for writing
- Separate out writing from editing

Useful resources

- Journal estimator: <https://jane.biosemantics.org/>
- Reporting guidelines: <https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/>
- Detailed guidelines are available from the Lancet for RCTs, systematic reviews and observational studies: <https://www.thelancet.com/preparing-your-manuscript>
- Guidance from ICMJE: <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/manuscript-preparation/preparing-for-submission.html>