

Key Terminology for Writing Tutors

APSU Writing Center Handout

This resource provides writing center tutors with key terminology from common academic disciplines. **Tutors are not expected to be subject experts.** They can use these terms to better understand what you're reading, ask informed questions, and focus on clarity, organization, and effective communication.

STEM Writing

- **IMRaD** – Standard structure: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion
- **Abstract** – Brief summary of the entire paper
- **Variable (Independent/Dependent)** – What is changed vs. what is measured
- **Control Group** – Baseline for comparison
- **Methodology** – Overall research approach or rationale
- **Replication** – Repeating a study to confirm results
- **p-value** – Probability results occurred by chance
- **Statistical Significance** – Results unlikely due to randomness
- **Data Set** – Collected information analyzed in the study
- **Quantitative vs. Qualitative** – Numerical data vs. descriptive data
- **Error Margin** – Range of uncertainty in results
- **Hypothesis** – Testable prediction

Social Science Writing

- **Literature Review** – Synthesis of existing research
- **Operationalization** – How a concept is measured
- **Validity (Internal/External)** – Accuracy vs. generalizability
- **Reliability** – Consistency of results
- **Correlation** – Relationship between variables
- **Causation** – One variable directly affects another
- **Sample Size** – Number of participants
- **Bias** – Systematic error in data or interpretation
- **Peer-Reviewed** – Evaluated by experts before publication
- **Method Section** – Explains how the study was conducted
- **Findings** – Results of the study
- **Limitations** – Weaknesses or constraints of the study

Business Writing

- **Executive Summary** – Standalone overview of a report
- **Stakeholders** – Individuals affected by decisions
- **ROI (Return on Investment)** – Measure of profitability
- **Deliverables** – Tangible project outcomes
- **KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)** – Metrics for success
- **SWOT Analysis** – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- **Market Analysis** – Evaluation of industry and competitors
- **Forecasting** – Predicting future trends or outcomes
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis** – Comparing expenses vs. gains

- **Action Plan** – Steps for implementation
- **Benchmarking** – Comparing performance to standards
- **Proposal** – Document recommending a course of action

History Writing

- **Thesis** – Argument about historical significance.
- **Historiography** – Study of how history is interpreted
- **Primary Source** – Original material from the period
- **Secondary Source** – Later analysis or interpretation
- **Contextualization** – Placing events in a broader context
- **Causation** – Explanation of why events happened
- **Continuity and Change** – What stayed the same vs. what changed over time
- **Bias** – Perspective influencing a source
- **Evidence** – Sources used to support claims
- **Citation (Chicago Style)** – Footnotes or endnotes format
- **Archival Research** – Use of historical documents/records
- **Argumentation** – Building and supporting a claim

Tip for Tutors

When you encounter unfamiliar terms, ask the writer to explain them. This both clarifies meaning and helps the writer strengthen their communication.