

Chapter 3 **INTRODUCTION:**

Reviewing Previous Research

In Stage I of your introduction you establish a *setting* for your topic. In Stage II you review the finding of the other researchers who have already published in your area of interest. For this reason, Stage II is often called ***the review of literature***. It is essentially an organized collection of reference, or citations, to other works which are listed in a separate section at the end of your report.

The review of literature serves three important functions:

First, it continues the process stated in Stage I of giving your readers background information needed to understand your study.

Second, it assures your readers that you are familiar with the important research that has been carried out in your area.

Third, it establishes your study as one link in a chain of research that is developing and enlarging knowledge in your field.

Citation Focus

When you cite the work of other authors, you may choose to focus either on *the information* provided by author, or on the author him- or herself. The first focus we call *information prominent* because the information is given primary importance. The author's name (s) and date of publication are parenthetically attached at the end the sentence. More complete source information is found in an alphabetical list of references at the end of the paper.

INFORMATION PROMENT CITATION

Information

+

Reference

In most deserts of the world, transitions between topographic elements are abrupt .

(Smith, 1968).

The literature on teaching effectiveness has established few theoretical grounds to guide the selection of meaningful variables.

(Doyle , 1978).

An alternate type of *information prominent citation* uses numbers between the parentheses (instead of author's name and date). The number refers to the alphabetical and numbered list of reference at the end of the paper.

INFORMATION PROMINENT CITATION

Information

+

Reference number

The introduction of high strength, high flexibility materials raised the need for a dynamic approach to floor design

(1,2,8,9)

Information prominent citations are commonly used to signal the beginning of Stage II, where the citations refer to research in the general area of your study. (They may appear in Stage I as well).

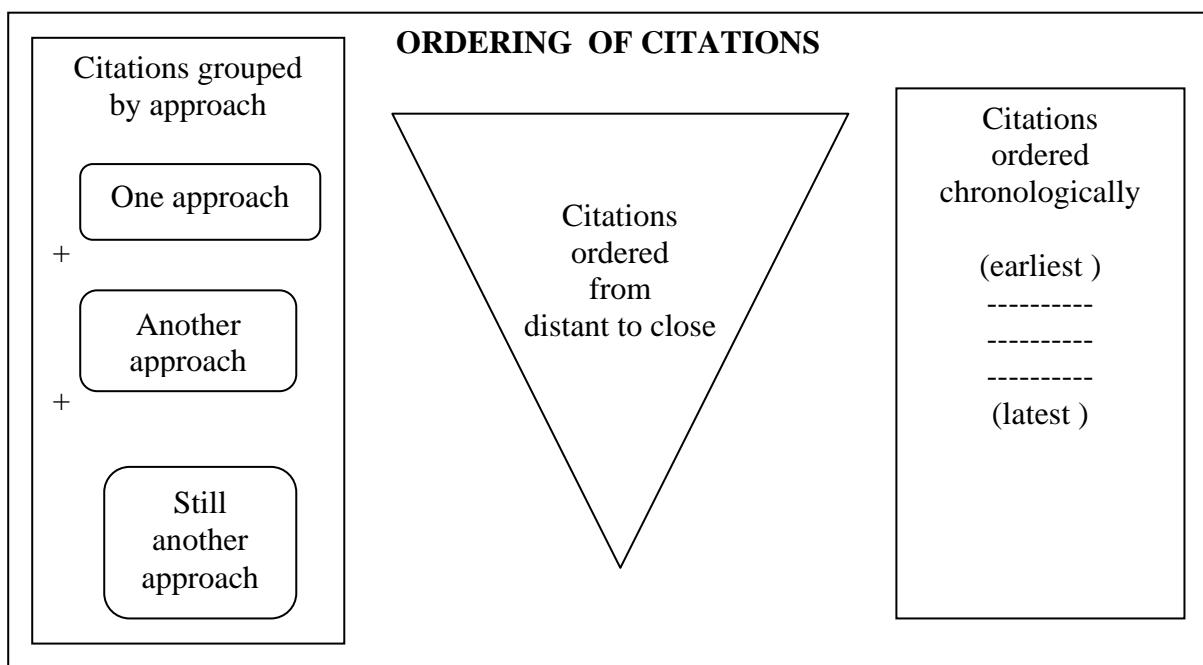
As the literature review continues, the citations refer to studies more closely related to your own. In this kind of citations, the authors name is given more emphasis. It serves as the subject of the sentence, followed by the date or citation number in parentheses, and then by the information. This kind of citation is called *author prominent*.

Writing Up Research

AUTHOR PROMINENT CITATION		
Last name of Author	Date or reference number	Information
Leopold	(1921)	listed foods, but gave no quantities data .
Allen and Reiner	(1)	described graphically the different between the various vibration scales

Order Of Citations

It is possible to arrange your Stage II citations in order from those *most distantly related* to your study to those *most closely related*, as in article on desert ecosystems. In addition, there are other ways to order your citations. For example, in a literature review describing the history of research in an area, you may arrange your citations in chronological order. Or, if you have a large number of citations to include in your literature review, as in a thesis or dissertation, you can group them according to the *different approaches* to the research problem taken by different authors. The citations within each group can then be ordered chronologically or from general to specific.



LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Citation focus and verb Tense

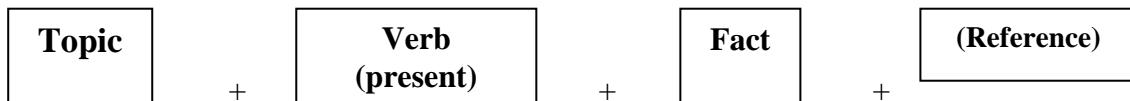
As we have seen, your decision whether to focus Stage II citations on the information or on the *author* determines the citation form you use. Similarly, this decision also helps to determine the verb tense you will use in each citation.

Tense in information Prominent Citations

When the focus of your citation is on the information, you should write the citation in the present tense. The present tense is used when the information you are citing is generally accepted as scientific fact.

Writing Up Research

INFORMATION PROMINENT: REPORTING FACTS



Nutrient resorption is a common phenomenon (Kramer, 1979) in forest trees

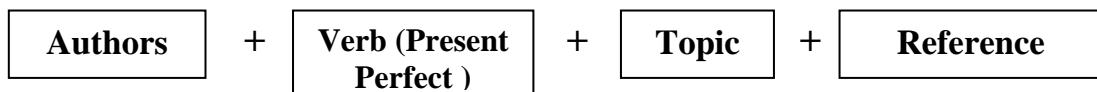
The factors that control the concentration of aluminum in seawater are poorly known (1)

Note: some publications use only citation form to credit sources.

Tense in Weak Author Prominent Citations

The present perfect tense is used in citations where the focus is on the research area of several authors. This kind of citation is called weak author prominent.

INFORMATION PROMINENT: REPORTING Facts



Several researchers have studied the relationship between Classroom adjustment and mobility (Madsen , 1980 ; Biggs , 1983 ; Randall 1985)

The factors that control the concentration of aluminum are poorly Known (1)

General Statements about the Research

The present perfect tense is also used in general statements that describe the level of research activity in an area. These statements are often written without citations.

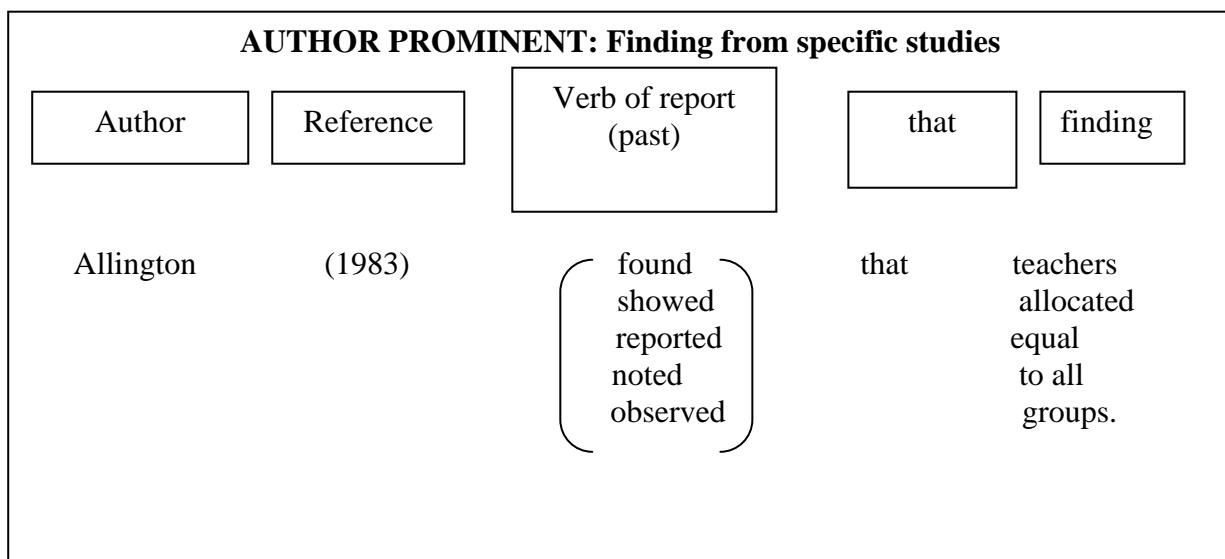
GENERAL STATEMENTS: Level of Research Activity		
Level	Verb (Present perfect)	Topic
Little research	has been done	on topic development in ESL students' composition.

Information prominent citations, *weak author prominent* citations, and general statements are usually written at *the beginning of Stage II*, or at transition points at the beginning of *new sections* within Stage II.

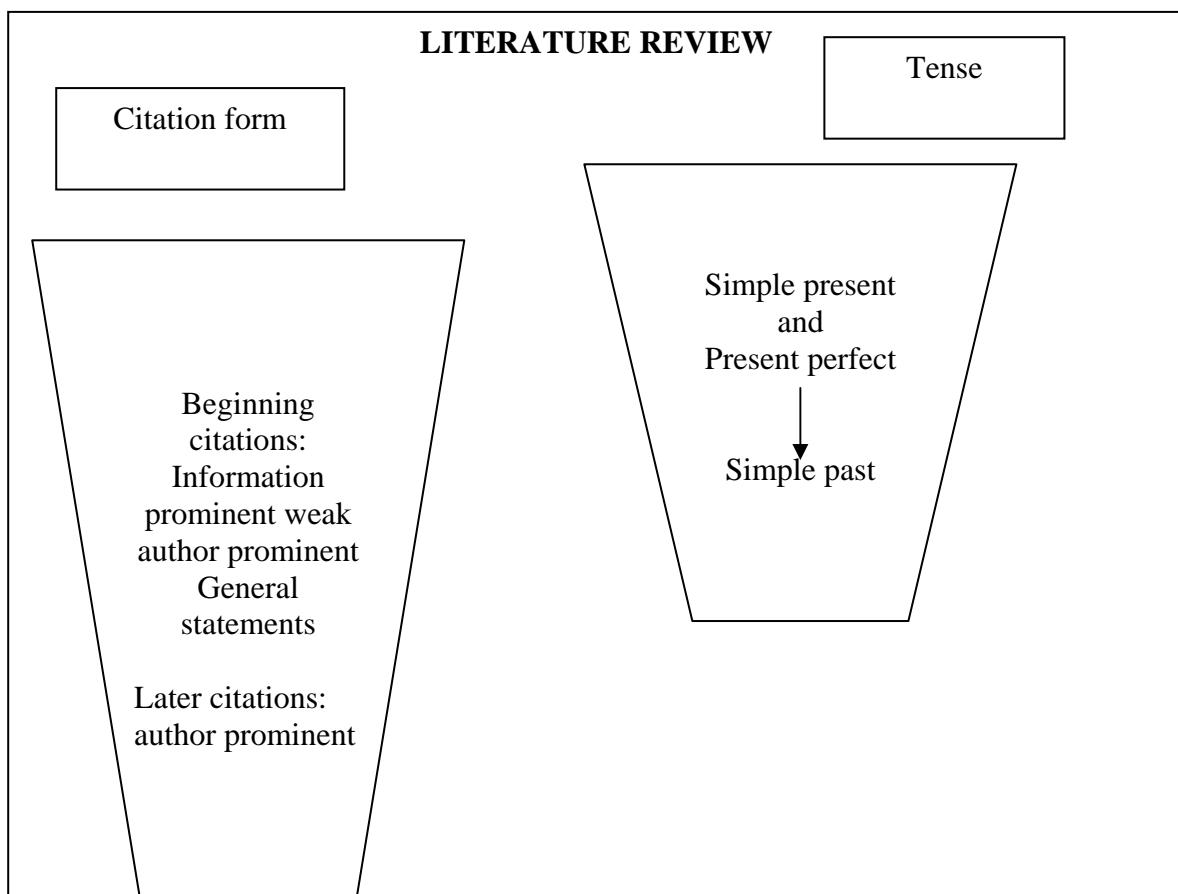
Tense in Author Prominent Citations

Later in Stage II, you use *author prominent citations* to report the finding of *individual studies* closely related to your own. In these *citations* the simple past tense is the verb of report.

Writing Up Research



As you can see from these rules, the progression of verb tenses in your literature review follows the progression shown in the diagram below.



Attitude and Tense in Reported Findings

I have seen that the focus you choose helps to determine the tenses of the verbs in your literature review. Similarly, in author prominent citations your attitude towards the findings of the researchers affects the complement verb forms in your Stage II sentences. You may feel that:

1. The finding of a particular study is generally accepted as fact;
2. the findings of a particular study are *limited to that study*, but are not to be accepted as true in all cases.
3. The author(s) of the study you are citing may themselves feel tentative about their findings; or they may not be reporting finding at all but only making suggestions or proposals.

Depending on which attitude you take towards the findings of the researchers you cite, you may use the *present tense*, the *past tense*, or *various modal auxiliaries*.

1. When you believe the findings you are citing are fact, use the present tense in the complement verb (that is, the verb in the part of the sentence giving the findings).

ATTITUDE TOWERDS FINDINGS: Accepted as fact				
Author	Reference number or date	Verb of report	That	Finding (present)
Sillen	(1)	showed	that	aluminm in seawater is regulated by a thermodynamic balance

2. When you believe the finding is restricted to the specific study you are citing, use the past tense in the complement verb.

Writing Up Research

ATTITUDE TOWARDS FINDINGS: Results limited to One Study			
Author(s)	Reference number or date	Verb of report	Findings (Past)
Abramson	(1974)	reported	that mobile students had lower academic performance.
Henderson and Harris	(7)	found	that 34.6 kg of nitrogen were cycled internally by trees.

3. Finally if the finding you are citing were seen by the original authors as tentative, or were only suggestions or proposals than findings, use tentative verbs for the verb of report, and a model auxiliary with the complement verb.

AUTHOR PROMINENT: Tentative Findings				
Author	+ Reference number	+ Verb of report	+ that	+ Tentative Findings (model auxiliary +verb)
Van Bennekom	(5)	proposed suggested hypothesized	that	aluminum may be common in diatom residues

Notice that in all three of these cases, the verb of report is always in the past tense, while the verb tense in the "findings" part of the sentence varies according to the author's attitude.