

## Hints for Writing a General Background section

Hint: Keep your General Background section focused.

Identify your process and **focus on one way of looking at it**. Identifying a sub-process (or part of your process) to focus on makes a good impression by showing the reader that you are more focused and interested in more precise, sophisticated questions.

- ❌ **Avoid** comparing different models, theories, or approaches unless your study focuses on how to decide between them.
- ❌ **Avoid** historical descriptions of changes in models, theories, or approaches.
- ❌ Do not talk about the brain **unless** you are studying the brain.

---

### Before “surgery”

In addition, comprehension requires the collaboration of structural analysis, fluency in reading, knowledge integration, comprehension strategies, and monitoring understanding (Edmonds and Vaughn, 2006). The collaboration of these sub processes is active and intentional with the goal of constructing meaning (Neufeld, 2005).

**[Be careful: The items in the list are not all sub-processes. Structural analysis and knowledge integration are sub-processes of comprehension; fluency is a characteristic of reading as a whole, not a sub-process; strategies are ways of manipulating the sub-processes – strategies are not sub-processes.]**

Another alternative model has emerged as an attempt to explain the mechanisms of the short-term memory.

When examining MRI images taken of both males and females during the execution of working memory related tasks, there are obvious differences in the level and placement of activity in separate areas of the brain.

---

### After

In addition, comprehension requires the coordination of word recognition, structural analysis, semantic interpretation, and knowledge integration (Edmonds and Vaughn, 2006). These sub processes are active and readers coordinate them with the goal of constructing meaning (Neufeld, 2005).

**<Choose only one model to present.>**

**<This is fine only if your experiment will *also* look at different areas and levels of activity in the brain. Otherwise, use this kind of brain-related information sparingly.>**

Hint: Do not *overcite* your sources.

- ❌ Do not cite *the same* study more than once in the same paragraph.
- ✅ Use [author-inside citation style](#).
- ✅ Every time you present a fact, cite your sources.

---

### Before “surgery”

Consistent with previous findings, pressure causes decrements in cognitive performance by reducing working memory available for processing (Marksman, Maddox, Worthy, 2006; Beilock & Carr 2005). Counter intuitively, the hypothesized decrement in working memory capacity improves performance (Marksman, Maddox, Worthy, 2006). Improvement is hypothesized to occur due to how reduced working memory capacity persons are less likely to consistently use a suboptimal rule-based hypothesis-testing strategy for learning the category distinction (Marksman, Maddox, Worthy, 2006). Instead, subjects allow their performance to be guided by an implicit similarity-based process. Pressure that influences performance of highly learned skills by causing people to engage explicitly process that

---

### After

Pressure causes decrements in cognitive performance by reducing the amount of working memory that is available for processing (Marksman, Maddox, & Worthy, 2006; Beilock & Carr, 2005).

Counterintuitively, when the amount of working memory decreases, performance improves. This seems to be because participants do not use rule-based hypothesis testing consistently when less working memory capacity is available. Instead, they use an implicit, highly learned process based on similarity which is less sensitive to variations in working memory capacity (Marksman, Maddox, & Worthy, 2006).

interferes with the learned procedure (Marksman, Maddox, Worthy, 2006).