

To help you build a strong arsenal of commonly used phrases in academic papers, we’ve compiled a list of synonyms you might want to consider when drafting or [editing your research paper](#). While we do not suggest that the phrases in the “Original Word/Phrase” column should be completely avoided, we do recommend interspersing these with the more dynamic terms found under “Recommended Substitutes.”

A. Describing the scope of a current project or prior research

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute
<div>To express the purpose of a paper or research</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">This paper/ study/ investigation...</div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">aims to</div>	<div>This paper + [use the verb that originally followed "aims to"] or This paper + (any other verb listed above as a substitute for “explain”) + who/what/when/where/how X. For example:</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">“This paper applies X to Y,” instead of, “This paper aims to apply X to Y.”“This paper explores how lower sun exposure impacts moods,” instead of, “This paper aims to address the impact of lower sun exposure on moods.”</div>
<div>To introduce the topic of a project or paper</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">The paper/ study/ article/ work...Prior research/ investigations...</div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">discussespresents</div>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">surveysquestionshighlightsoutlinesfeaturesinvestigates</div>

<p>To describe the analytical scope of a paper or study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper/ study/ article/ work... • Prior research/ investigations... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considers • analyzes • explains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluates • interprets • clarifies • identifies • delves into • advances • appraises • defines • dissects • probes • tests • explores <p>*Adjectives to describe degree can include: briefly, thoroughly, adequately, sufficiently, inadequately, insufficiently, only partially, partially, etc.</p>
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To preview other sections of a paper • Section X...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covers • deals with • talks about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outlines • highlights • sketches • assesses • contemplates <p>[any of the verbs suggested as replacements for “explain,” “analyze,” and “consider” above]</p>
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B. Outlining a topic’s background

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute
To discuss the historical significance of a topic • Subject/ Mechanism...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plays an important in [nominalization] • plays a vital role in [nominalization] 	Topic significantly/considerably + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influences • controls • regulates • directs • inhibits

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constrains • governs <p>+ who/what/when/where/how...</p> <p>*In other words, take the nominalized verb and make it the main verb of the sentence.</p>
<p>To describe the historical popularity of a topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X Theory... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...is widely accepted as... • ...is widely used as... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely accepted, ... [to eliminate the weak <i>be</i> verb] • The preferred... • Commonly/Frequently implemented,... [to eliminate the weak <i>be</i> verb] • The prevailing method for...
<p>To describe the recent focus on a topic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much attention has been drawn to • ...has gained much importance in recent years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions regarding X have dominated research in recent years. • ...has appealed to... • ...has propelled to the forefront in investigations of Y. • ... has dramatically/significantly shaped queries on X in recent years. • ...has critically influenced academic dialogue on Y.
<p>To identify the current majority opinion about a topic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consensus has been that... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior research generally confirms that... • Several studies agree that... • Prior research substantiates the belief that...

<p>To discuss the findings of existing literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous studies... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicate • have documented • have demonstrated • have shown that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contend • purport • suggest • proffer • have proven that • evidence
<p>To express the breadth of our current knowledge-base, including gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much is known about... • But, little is known about... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academic community has extensively explored X... • Prior research has thoroughly investigated.... • However, little research has been conducted to show... • However, prior studies have failed to evaluate/ identify / (any other word suggested to replace “analyze” above)
<p>To segue into expressing your research question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several theories have been proposed to explain... • To solve this problem, many researchers have tried several methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent/Previous studies have promoted... • Prior investigations have implemented/ queried diverse approaches to... • A number of authors have posited...

C. Describing the analytical elements of a paper

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute
<p>To express agreement between one finding and another</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This paper/ study/ investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• substantiates• confirms• corroborates• underlines
<p>To present contradictory findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This paper/ study/ investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• calls into question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• challenges• disputes• rebuts• refutes• disproves• debunks• invalidates• rejects• questions

To discuss limitations of a study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The limitations of this paper include: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These investigations, however, disregards... • This method/ approach fails to... • This study only... • ...falls short of addressing/ identifying / illustrating... • A drawback/disadvantage of this framework is... • This framework, however, solely pertains to...
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D. Discussing results

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute
To draw inferences from results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data... • These findings... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggest • show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extrapolate • deduce • surmise • approximate • derive

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extract
To describe observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Observed event or result]... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appeared • was observed to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence • manifested • surfaced • materialized • yielded • generated • perceived • detected

E. Discussing methods

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute
To discuss methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study... • X method... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used • performed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applied • administered

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employed • diffused • disseminated • relayed
To describe simulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simulation... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • was created to... • was used to... • was performed to... 	This study/ research... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simulated • replicated • imitated + “X environment/ condition to..” + [any of the verbs suggested as replacements for “analyze” above]

F. Explaining the impact of new research

Purpose	Original Word/Phrase	Recommended Substitute

<p>To explain the impact of a paper's findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper/ study/ investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates • shows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illustrates • proves • evidences • strengthens (the position that)
<p>To highlight a paper's conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper/ study/ investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes • proves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attributes • illustrates • advances (the idea that)
<p>To explain how research contributes to the existing knowledge-base</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper/ study/ investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offers • introduces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ushers in • proffers • conveys • promotes • advocates • introduces • broach (issue) • reveals

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unveils• exposes• unearths
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