There are 3 common tenses used in academic writing:

- Present Simple Tense
- Past Simple Tense
- Present Perfect Tense

Let's take a closer look at each of these tenses to understand when we should use them!

**Present Simple Tense**

Present simple tense is considered the "default" tense in academic writing, meaning we will always write in present simple tense unless we have a specific reason or circumstance requiring a different tense for accuracy and clarity.

**Some specific functions for present simple tense are:**

- Framing a topic/paper (describing what has already been said about a certain topic and contextualizing the scholarly conversation)
- Making general statements of analysis, argumentation, or interpretation of research
- Asserting claims in your own paper
- Referencing claims from others' research and papers
- Describing events in a literary work (this is called narrative present)
- Referring to tables, figures, and other multimedia in papers
Past Simple Tense

Past simple tense is used to refer to events or actions that took place at a specific point in the past. Past simple tense may be used more often in STEM writing, where methods and data are described.

Some specific functions for present simple tense are:

- Describing the methods and/or data from a completed experiment or study (usually in STEM papers)
- Discussing specific findings of a previous study
- Clarifying past-time events with specific markers

Present Perfect Tense

Present perfect tense is used as a bridge between a past event and the present moment (because it is a present tense, its use indicates that the past event/finding is still relevant to current events/findings). Present perfect emphasizes what has been done rather than specific claims or findings.

Some specific functions for present simple tense are:

- Introducing a general area of research or a new topic relevant to the paper
- Introducing different perspectives or ideas on a topic, or contradictory findings to show the different views on a scholarly conversation
- Summarizing previous research without specific authors
- Identifying gaps in existing research