



Discussion

The Discussion section is where you interpret and evaluate your findings. Your job here is to address the questions/issues raised in the introduction in light of the results. However, you should not be restating your results or points you have already made. You will want to organize your discussion section into three parts:

- Part 1: Reviewing hypotheses and results
- Part 2: Discussing the findings in the context of the existing literature and addressing the limitations of your study.
- Part 3: Summarizing the study's contribution to the literature and providing suggestions for future research.

Reviewing hypotheses and results and discussing findings

Start this section by stating whether or not the findings supported your hypothesis. You can also compare your findings to those of other researchers. If your findings do not support your hypothesis, provide a rationale for why you think this happened. This section also involves a return to literature to place your findings in context. Discuss how your study results fit in with other studies that have already been published. Are they similar or different? Discuss why you believe this to be the case and weave in relevant citations to bolster your case.

Addressing limitations

You should also acknowledge any limitations of your study that might prevent firm conclusions from being drawn from your results (e.g., flaws in design, or population studied), address alternative explanations for the findings, and provide suggestions for future research (especially suggestions to overcome any problems you had or limitations of your study).

Summarizing and providing suggestions

You should end this section by discussing why the findings are important and how your findings can be applied to actual settings. Also, discuss how your study adds to the existing literature and emphasize your study's strengths to leave the reader with a strong impression of your work. This might also involve attention to the implications of the study in terms of the "big picture." In other words, what do your findings mean in the real world? What can you conclude about the meaning of your findings?

Some researchers will have a combined Results and Discussion section. This is primarily used when the author is describing multiple experiments or both sections are very short.

See the sample experimental report for an example of a Discussion section.

The following information must remain intact on every handout printed for distribution.

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<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/APA/print/parts/discussion.html>

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