

Discussion

Purpose of the discussion

- State your interpretations and opinions
- Explain the implications of your findings
- Make suggestions for future research
- Answer the question posed in the introduction

Purpose of the discussion

- Explain how results support the answers
- How the answers fit with existing knowledge on the topic
- Considered the heart of the paper – usually requires several writing attempts

Writing the discussion

- Organise from the specific to the general; your findings to the literature, to theory, to practice.
- Use the same key terms, verb tense (present) and same view as when posing question in INTRO.
- Start by restating the hypothesis, answering the questions in the INTRO.

Writing the discussion

- Explain how results are related to expectations and literature – clearly state why they are acceptable, and consistent with previous findings.
- Address all the results relating to questions, whether sig. or not

Writing the discussion

- Describe patterns, principles and relationships of each major result and in perspective. State the answer, relevant results and others work.
- Defend your answers; give both sides of any argument to make your explanation convincing.
- Discuss and evaluate conflicting explanations.

Writing the discussion

- Discuss unexpected findings. Start with the finding then describe
- Identify potential limitations and relative importance of each to your interpretation and the validity of the results. Avoid apologetic tone.
- Summarise concisely the main implications, regardless of statistical sig.

Writing the discussion

- Provide recommendations for further research, but not if it could have been addressed in the study!
- Explain how the results are important and influence our knowledge or understanding
- Discuss everything, but with clarity and brevity.

Main sections

Draft outline points for each section in Discussion:

- **Para 1: main message(s)**
- **Para 2: Comparison with other studies**
- **Para 3: Expand on key messages (optional)**
- **Para 4: Strengths & Weaknesses (limitations)**
- **Para 5: Implications for: clinicians; public health professionals; policy makers.**
- **Refine & polish. Most important sentences: FIRST, and LAST**

Finally

- **Self-Criticism at the Heart of Writing a Discussion Section** - not always about what you found, but what you did not find, and how you deal with that.
- **Using the Discussion Section to Expand Knowledge** - you can make a statement about whether the study has contributed to knowledge in the field, or not.
- **Conclusion** – draws everything together and ties it to your initial question – what have you shown, what has it contributed to knowledge, limitations, further work, applicability to the real world.