

# The research paper

Communicating research findings to  
the broader community

# Writing a research paper: Purpose

- I. To add to scientific knowledge
  - A. as it relates to prior knowledge
  - B. as it provides new knowledge
- II. To convey information clearly and concisely
  - A. clarity of presentation
  - B. conciseness of presentation

# Types of articles and representative journals

## I. Theory development

A. Psychological Review

B. Psychological Inquiry

## II. Reviews of prior findings

A. Psychological Bulletin

B. American Psychologist

C. Current Directions in Psychological Science

## III. “Archival” data

A. peer reviewed studies that are worth publishing

B. because of new findings or methods

# Types of Journals

## I. Broad band

### A. Interest to all fields:

1. Science
2. Nature

### B. Interest to all Psychologists

1. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
2. Psychological Science

## II. Interest to a narrow field

### A. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

### B. Journal of Abnormal Psychology

### C. Cognitive Psychology

### D. Developmental Psychology

# Types of Journals (continued)

## I. Methodology

A. Psychological Methods

B. Psychometrika

C. Psychological Assessment

D. Applied Psychological Measurement

E. Multivariate Behavioral Research

# Conventional Styles

## I. Science/Psychological Science/Nature

A. emphasis upon problem and conclusions

B. methods and detailed results last

## II. APA journals

A. APA manual of style

B. Intro - Method - Results - Conclusions

## III. Chapters

A. Stand alone content - integrative structure

## IV. Books

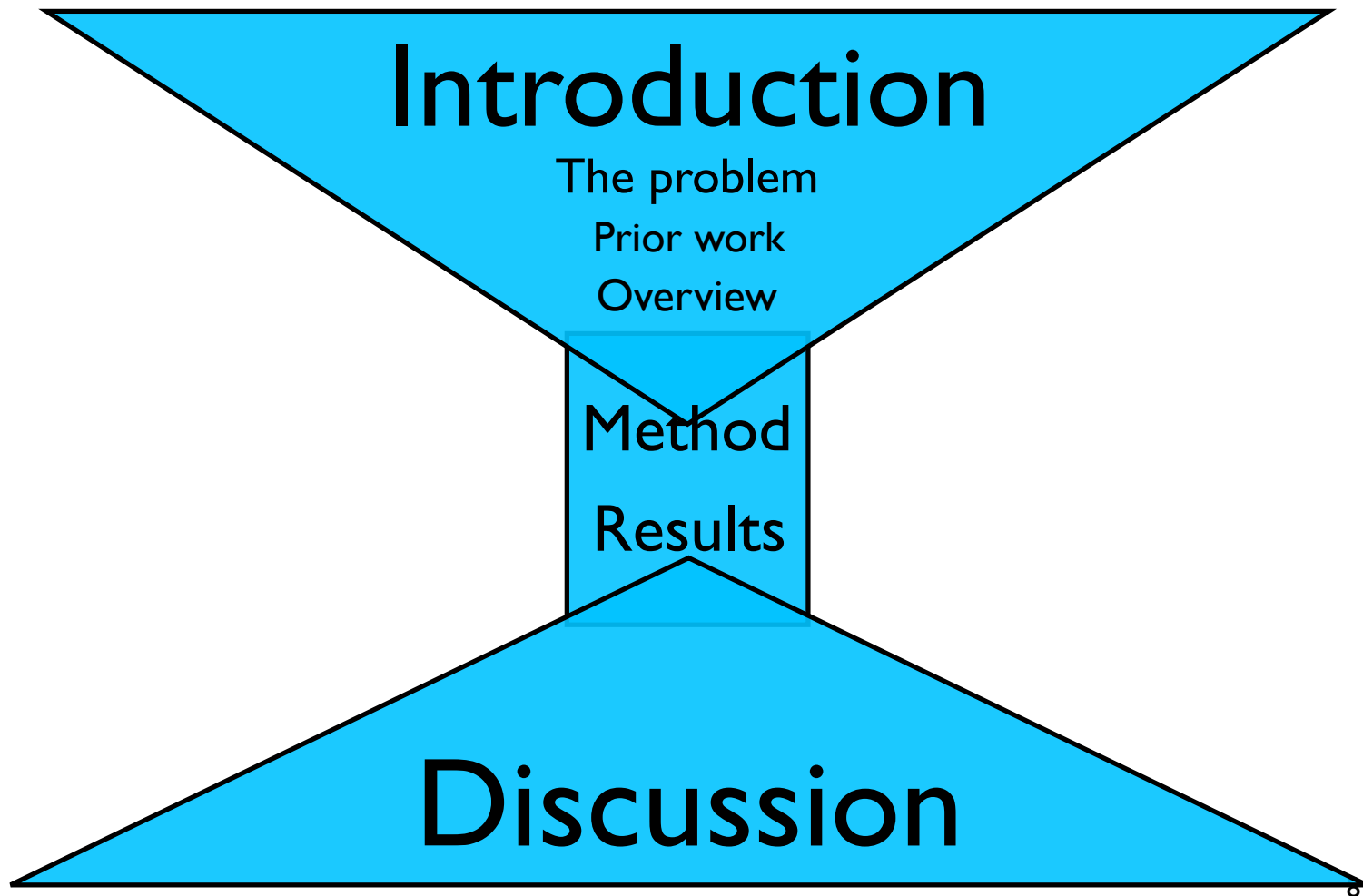
A. Edited chapters

B. Monograph

# Sections of an APA article

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Method
5. Results
6. Discussion and Conclusion
7. References
8. Tables
9. Figure Captions
10. Figures

# Structure of a paper an hourglass



# Title Page

- (a) title
- (b) author(s)
- (c) affiliation
- (d) running head

# Abstract

- In less than 100-150 words, tell:
  - What was the problem
  - What was done
    - with how many participants
    - gender of participants
  - What was found
  - What does it mean
- (Write the abstract last)

# Introduction

- I. Theoretical questions being examined
  - A. Why is it interesting?
  - B. Why is it important
- II. Review of previous work
  - A. What has already been found?
  - B. What unsolved problems are raised by the prior research?
  - C. Are there methodological flaws in previous research that need to be addressed?
- III. Overview of study
  - A. Brief paragraph describing basic design
  - B. Variables of interest

# Methods/Procedures

I. Enough information to allow someone to replicate the study if they chose to do so

A. Subjects/participants

1. who were they
2. how were they chosen
3. what special characteristics do they have

B. Apparatus

1. any special equipment or forms

C. Procedure

1. what was said by the experimenter
2. what was asked of the participant

# Results

- I. Any finding worth discussing is introduced here
  - A. say it in words
    1. (doing X led to an increase in Y)
  - B. say it in numbers  
(mean Y for low X = , mean Y for high X =
  - C. say it in statistics ( $F_{a,b} = xx.xx$ ,  $p < .0y$ )
  - D. references are made to tables and figures  
(insert table X about here)  
actual tables and figures appear later in manuscript

# Discussion and Conclusion

## I. What do the results mean

A. In a manner that a generalist can understand

B. In a manner that a specialist will appreciate

## II. How do the results relate to the original hypotheses?

A. Why are they different? (If they are)

## III. Implications for further study

A. What should be the next set of studies to be conducted?

## IV. Final paragraph giving “take home message”

# Final sections

## References

(a) literature cited

refer to articles actually read by you

(if important but not read by you, cite as “as cited by ...”)

Tables (see Leary, Plonsky)

Figure Captions ( one page for captions for all of the figures)

Figures

(do not include figure captions on these figures)

# Additional comments

## Stylistic considerations

- (1) general style of writing
- (2) specific requirements
  - (a) partially meant for the ease of editing
  - (b) margins and spacing
  - (c) levels of headings
  - (d) running heads

# General style considerations

## Overall

Write for the intelligent but uninformed reader

Remember what is important in each paragraph and each section.

Topic sentences should be able to stand by themselves

## Minor comments

complete sentences

no unnecessary words

Proofread -- spelling and punctuation!

remember: tense

data are plural!

# Guides to writing an APA paper

- APA manual of style - The official reference
- Leary (Chapter 15) detailed example
- Plonsky “cheat sheet” to the APA paper
  - <http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/apa4b.htm>