

The research paper

Communicating research findings to
the broader community

Writing a research paper: Purpose

- To add to scientific knowledge
 - a) as it relates to prior knowledge
 - b) as it provides new knowledge
- To convey information clearly and concisely
 - a) clarity of presentation
 - b) conciseness of presentation

Types of articles and representative journals

1. Theory development
 - a) Psychological Review
2. Reviews of prior findings
 - a) Psychological Bulletin
 - b) American Psychologist
3. “Archival” data
 - a) studies that are worth publishing

Types of Journals

Broad band

Interest to all fields:

Science, Nature

Interest to all Psychologists

Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
Psychological Science

Interest to a narrow field

- (1) Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
- (2) Journal of Abnormal Psychology
- (3) Cognitive Psychology
- (4) Developmental Psychology

Types of Journals (continued)

- Methodology
 - Psychological Methods
 - Psychometrika
 - Psychological Assessment
 - Applied Psychological Measurement
 - Multivariate Behavioral Research

Conventional Styles

- Science/Psychological Science/Nature
- APA journals
 - APA manual of style
- Chapters
- Books

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

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 subjects
 - What was found
 - What does it mean
- (Write the abstract last)

Introduction

Theoretical questions being examined

Why is it interesting?

Review of previous work

What has already been found?

What unsolved problems are raised by the prior research?

Are there methodological flaws in previous research that need to be addressed?

Overview of study

Brief paragraph describing basic design

Methods/Procedures

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

Subjects/participants

who were they

how were they chosen

what special characteristics do they have

Apparatus

any special equipment or forms

Procedure

what was said by the experimenter

what was asked of the participant

Results

Any finding worth discussing is introduced here

say it in words

say it in numbers

say it in statistics

references are made to tables and figures

(insert table X about here)

actual tables and figures appear later in
manuscript

Discussion and Conclusion

What do the results mean

In a manner that a generalist can understand

In a manner that a specialist will appreciate

How do the results relate to the original hypotheses?

Why are they different? (If they are)

Implications for further study

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

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

Figure Captions

Figures

Additional comments

Stylistic considerations (consult APA cheat sheet)

- (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 and that data are plural!

Guides to writing an APA paper

- APA manual of style
- Leary
- Plonsky “cheat sheet” to the APA paper