

Writing a results section for
health research papers
(research proposals
dissertations)

Research paper structure

- Introduction: why ask this research question?
- Methods: what did we do?
- **Results: what did we find?**
- Discussion: what might it mean?
- Conclusion: overall key message.

The purpose of the results section

To summarise the findings of applying your methods:

- the data that were collected
- the results of the statistical (or thematic) analyses that were performed.
- Report results fully & honestly, as pre-specified

Needs to be done with very little subjective interpretation

Save your interpretation for what such results might mean in the discussion section.

What to include

- Present in a logical order:
 - The features of the participants (descriptive)
 - Results by research question
- Text (story), Tables and figures)with the more detailed evidence)
- Report primary outcomes first
- Report essential summary statistics
- Include Effect Sizes and give confidence intervals for main results
- Results of sub -roup and sensitivity analyses (distinguish a priori from exploratory analyses).

Sufficient but not too much detail

- The results section should be a relatively brief overview of your findings, not a complete presentation of every single number and calculation.
- Leave out non-essential tables and figures; these can be included as supplementary files
- Can numerical results be extracted from your paper easily (for a meta-analysis)?
-

Results should justify your claims later in the paper

Make sure that the information reported in the results section justifies your claims.

As you write your discussion section, look back on your results to ensure that all the data you need is there to fully support the conclusions you reach.

Report Your Statistical Findings

- Assume that your readers have a solid understanding of statistical concepts. There's no need to explain a t-test!
- Include Effect Sizes, ORs and confidence intervals don't just report p-values

Don't Omit Relevant Findings

- Be sure to mention *all* relevant information.
- If your hypothesis expected more statistically significant results, don't omit
- Don't ignore negative results. Just because a result failed to support your hypothesis, it does not mean it is not important.

Use international guidance on reporting by study design

- CONSORT: randomised trials
- STROBE: observational studies in epidemiology
- STARD: diagnostic accuracy studies
- COREQ: qualitative research
- SQUIRE: quality improvement studies
- COGS: clinical practice guidelines PRISMA: systematic reviews

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Use the
STROBE-NUT
guideline

to report observational
studies in nutrition



Use guideline relevant to your study design

<http://www.equator-network.org/toolkits/writing-research/#Goodexamples>

Strobe for Observational Studies:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/corecgi/tileshop/tileshop.fcgi?p=PMC3&id=315420&s=12&r=6&c=4>

Qualitative studies:

<https://academic.oup.com/view-large/27217733>