

**Writing a conclusion section  
for health research papers  
(or 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 conclusion section

To:

- Highlight to the reader the most important part of their study
- Stress a particular recommendation (for policy, research) or idea, or assertion

# What to include

- The principal findings stated in a few sentences and the most important implications of these findings.
  - What are the main take-home messages of your study?
  - What is the main contribution that your study makes to your field?

The strength, novelty, and importance of the study, along with future research suggestions, can also be highlighted.

An effective conclusion should provide closure for a paper

# Example

In this study, we compared the effectiveness of stent placement in patients with partially blocked arteries with non-invasive interventions in an RCT. Five-year medical outcomes of 19,457 patients in England, were equivalent in both groups. Although previous findings indicated that stents improved patient outcomes, our study followed a greater number of patients than in previous studies. It is possible that outcomes would vary with longer follow-up. Future researchers should consider the impact of stent placement over more than five years. Regardless, our results point to the need for medical practitioners to reconsider the placement of a stent as the first line of treatment as non-invasive interventions may have equally positive outcomes for patients at lower cost.

# Tips for writing the conclusion

- Make it concise
- Do not introduce new ideas or findings
- Any claims you make must be supported by evidence in your findings (and/or elsewhere)
- Do not over-sell, or over interpret.

# How to choose a journal - scope and reputation

- Make sure your paper fits within the scope of the journal
- Check journals which published papers you have referenced in your manuscript
- Assess the credentials of the journal or publisher - Check the quality of their website <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- Browse the content they publish for quality and relevance to your field
- Check what tools and services they offer to authors
- Submit your research to one journal only, but check if they offer transfers to other journals
- Follow the instructions for authors carefully

# How to respond to referees comments

Where possible revise and resubmit rather than sending their article elsewhere.

Overcome feelings of personal attack or resentment, and instead concentrate on addressing referees' concerns in a courteous, objective and evidence-based way.

Respond in a structured way

Make it easy for them to see how you have responded

Respond completely

Respond politely

Respond supported by evidence

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190962204005377?via%3Dihub](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190962204005377?via%3Dihub)

# Deciding authorship - criteria

- Try to agree this early on and avoid disputes later.
- Discuss authorship throughout the course of the project,
- Stick to clear international guidelines:
  - Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
  - Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
  - Final approval of the version to be published; AND
  - Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

Managing (senior) co-authors who are slow  
in contributing/responding