

General Quantitative/Qualitative Research Document Format

Most quantitative and some qualitative research papers, as they often appear in social science, life science, nursing, and other disciplinary publications, include the same general parts:

1. Introduction
2. Review of Literature
3. Methodology
4. Findings (also called Results)
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. References (APA)
8. Appendices

This document gives you a basic overview; your discipline will have specific requirements that may deviate from what is provided here. Consult your professor for further specifications.

Introduction

Establishes...

- What you are discussing.
- Why you are discussing it.
- Why your audience should listen.

What to do:

- State the problem you are going to address. This is sometimes referred to as identifying a gap in the disciplinary knowledge.
- Briefly discuss what the discipline (your audience) already knows about the subject. This may include background information such as summaries of definitions, histories, and/or theories that help your reader "get up to speed" on the problem.

- Briefly explain how you will fill this gap in the knowledge. What are your methods?
- State the principle results of the study.
- State your principle conclusions.

Review of Literature

This is an expanded discussion of what the discipline (your audience) already knows. This may include more developed discussions of definitions, histories, and/or theories. It establishes for your reader:

1. That you understand the topic.
2. That your contribution is valuable.
3. That they do not have to read other literature to understand what you are studying and why you are studying it.

Methodology

The methodology section should explain what you did in your research so that anyone who reads it can replicate what you did. Conciseness and detail are essential.

Consider all of the following in detail and address any of these that are appropriate for your study:

- What type of study did you choose and why?
- Who or what did you study and why? If a subject population needed to be protected according to Institutional Review Board requirements, how did you do it?
- How did you identify your pool?
- How did you identify your sample?
- What tools did you use to collect data, why, and how did you design them?

Should they be included in an appendix?

- Did you describe exactly what you did to collect data in as close to chronological order as possible?
- Did you describe the statistical or data analysis procedures that you used?

Findings (sometimes called Results)

These are the answers that your research produced. This is not a presentation of raw data, but a presentation of the numbers or facts determined from the analysis.

- If you are using a hypothesis, this is where you state whether you accept or reject that hypothesis.
- Properly formatted tables and charts can make this a very short but very effective section. It is not always necessary to repeat in paragraph what you show in a chart. Text should lead the reader to the chart or table, not repeat what can already be seen.

Discussion

Some disciplines forego the conclusion (especially life sciences). Discussion serves as their closing argument instead.

In this section, you should:

- Avoid repeating what you showed in the "Findings" section.
- Offer generalizations, principles, or relationships
- Identify points that lack correlation or offer exceptions.
- Show how your research agrees/disagrees with similar and/or prior studies.

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- Discuss the impact of your work on theory and/or practice.
- Present summarized evidence for each claim/conclusion you make.
- Identify the significance of your paper; answer the question “So what?”

Conclusion

If a conclusion is not required for your specific discipline, consider whether or not these questions can be answered in the “Discussion” section.

- What did you conclude – how did you “fill the knowledge gap?”
- What gap in the knowledge remains? What issues remain unresolved?
- What were the limitations of your study? What could not be determined from your research?
- What could be done with the ideas you have offered? What should readers do or consider when conducting additional research or taking an intellectual position?

It always pays to make sure this links to the introduction and that it’s clear and specific; this is a reader’s last impression of you.

References

Also called Works Cited or Bibliography (depending on discipline and style)

Appendices

Provide additional documents that are pertinent to, but not easily inserted into the body of the text. Appendices often include questionnaires, surveys, interview questions, sample documents, etc.

Submitted by Dr. Robert T. Koch Jr.
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<http://www.una.edu/writingcenter>

References

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