

DISCUSSION SECTIONS of research articles

What is the difference between the Results section and the Discussion section of research articles?

Results vs. Discussion

Results sections:

- deal with factual statements and their interpretations

Discussion sections:

- deal with new knowledge claims
- are **more** theoretical, abstract, general, integrated with the field, connected to the real world, concerned with implications, applications, and limitations **than** Results sections

Read the statements in the handout. Do you agree (A) or disagree (D) with them?

What are the typical moves of the Discussion section of research articles?

TYPICAL MOVES USED IN DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS

1. Background information
2. Summarizing and reporting key results
3. Commenting on the key results
4. Stating limitations and making recommendations for future implementation and research

MOVE 1: Background information (research purposes, theory, methodology)

- Optional
- The aim is to contextualize the study by revisiting the introduction (research questions / hypotheses, theory) and methodology.
- Thus, the research space is consolidated.

Revisiting the Introduction

Prior work *has documented the effectiveness of psychosocial intervention in improving quality of life...* (**revisiting previous research**)

However, these studies have either been short-term or... (**revisiting the gap/weakness/etc.**)

Revisiting the Methodology

In this study we tested the extent to which an extended three-month stress management program improved quality of life among a group of patients being treated for stress-related skin disorders... (revisiting the methodology used in this study)

MOVE 2: Summarizing and reporting key results

- Obligatory
- *We found that in virtually all cases, participation in our three-month stress management program was associated with substantial increases in ...* (**revisiting and summarizing the results**)

MOVE 3: Commenting on the key results

- Obligatory
- Writers make claims, explain the results
- Writers refer first to their study and then relate to previous work in their field
- They compare the work/approach of other researchers in order to **validate** their own work or possibly **discredit** the work of the other researchers.

Our current findings expand prior work [5].

Unlike McGowan, we did not identify

This method provides results that are comparable to existing

Interpreting the implications

- You can use the **Present Simple** – to express permanent truths and facts, it will give your sentence the status of a fact

We found that x occurs, which indicates / suggests that y causes z...

- You can also use the **Past Simple** if you are less confident or less sure of the results

We found that x occurred, which indicated / suggested that y caused z...

- **Hedging:** *The results seem to indicate that...*

Expressing achievement or contribution

Vocabulary used to state your achievement or contribution can be:

- **exciting:** *compelling, exceptional, excellent ...*
- **less exciting but still positive:** *important, realistic, relevant, exact, clear, novel ...*

Our results provide compelling evidence that...

The presence of such high levels is a novel finding.

MOVE 4: Limitations and recommendations

- Outlining the limitations of the work and providing suggestions for future work
- These suggestions improve the status of the work by communicating that there is much research to be done in this area.

Our results are encouraging and should be validated in a larger cohort of women.

Future work should focus on ...

Implementations

- Indicating possible applications or applicability of the study
- Typical use of modals such as *could*, *should* and *may*

Our technique can be applied to ...

This approach has potential in areas such as ...

This could eventually lead to the identification of ...

The solution method could be applied ...