

Writing the Discussion

Introduction section

- ❑ Define the problem
 - ❑ Brief review of state of current literature
 - Limitations of previous studies
 - Controversies, unanswered questions
 - How can you do better?
 - ❑ State your hypothesis
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Discussion section - General

- Don't repeat your results in detail; don't present new results
- Highlight specific results that will emphasize your message
- Shape the discussion to convey the message you want

Discussion section

- Expand on points presented in Introduction
 - Put your findings in context of previous literature
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Discussion section

- Compared to past studies
 - On what points do you agree with most? Why?
 - On what points do you differ? Why?

Discussion section

- State strengths and limitations of your study
 - What is your contribution to the literature?
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Who should you cite?

- Need to know the literature
 - Read whole articles, not just abstracts
 - Discuss studies on both sides of the issue, whether they support or conflict with your results
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Who should you cite?

- Some journals limit total number of words, number of references
 - Original articles
 - Landmark studies
 - Similar design, population, etc.
 - Review articles/meta-analyses plus most current original articles

Additional points to discuss

- Consider type of journal and readership
 - Potential biological mechanisms to explain your results
 - Clinical and/or Public Health implications
- Recommendations for future studies

End with a simple, memorable statement

- In conclusion,
- Briefly restate major finding at end of discussion and its implications