

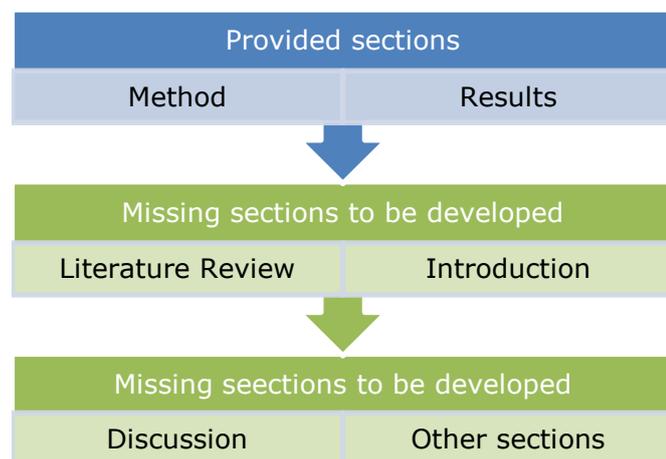
Lab Report

A psychology lab report gives an account of an experiment about human behaviour. The account not only includes the information about the process of the experiment, but also communicates the relevance, validity and reliability of the research in a well-developed line of argument. A lab report demonstrates how the current study relates to previous research, and how it contributes to this growing body of knowledge.

Content

Writing a lab report is a process of deduction. Each section in a lab report has direct links to the other sections; all sections are logically related. As such, it is possible to predict what needs to be included in any section even if only a few sections are available to read.

Some lab report assignments provide students with the method and results sections, and then ask students to write the other sections of the lab report. That is, students are asked to deduce the research question and hypothesis or hypotheses from the method and results sections.



This means that when completing these types of assignments, you may need to think about drafting the missing sections in a non-linear order. As you construct the missing information, the process may seem to jump from one section to another. For example, you may go from the sections provided (method and results, for example) to the literature review before working on the introduction.

Structure

Remember, however, the final lab report will need to be sequenced in the following order:

- Title
- Introduction
- Literature Review (sometimes this is part of the introduction)
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

Some lab reports may also require an abstract and/or a title page with the title of the report, the student's name and the institutional affiliation (ACAP).

Some reports may also have an appendix with information that does not need to go in the body of the report but would be useful for the reader. Always check the specific requirements for your assessment in the unit outline and with your educator.

The structure of a lab report is made clear by headings and sub-headings, which need to be formatted according to APA Style.

Formatting headings according to APA Style

The APA Publication Manual gives guidelines for up to five levels of heading in a paper, although most lab report assignments will need only two or three levels.

1. The first level should be centered and in bold. Each main word should start with a capital letter.
2. The second level should be left aligned and in bold. Each main word should start with a capital letter.
3. The third level should be indented and in bold. Only the first letter of the first word should be capitalised, as well as the first letter of the first word after a colon. The heading should end with a full stop. The paragraph begins straight after the heading (i.e. in line with the heading).

For more detail on formatting headings, check out the APA Website (www.apastyle.org) and the APA Style Blog (www.blog.apastyle.org).

Style

Reports need to be written in a formal and clear style. Reports may present information in paragraphs, and also in bullet points and numbered lists.

Some information in a report might be best presented as a table or figure (graphs, charts and diagrams) and these must also be

presented professionally. They need to be labelled with an identifier (e.g. Figure 1 or Table 1) and a title/caption.

The information in the table or figure needs to be discussed within the report, that is, you need to explain what it means in words and refer to the graphic being discussed (e.g. As shown in Figure 1, there was an increase in.....).

Check the instructions and marking criteria for your assignment as they may add specific requirements. Also see the SLS website information on writing a report.

Tips

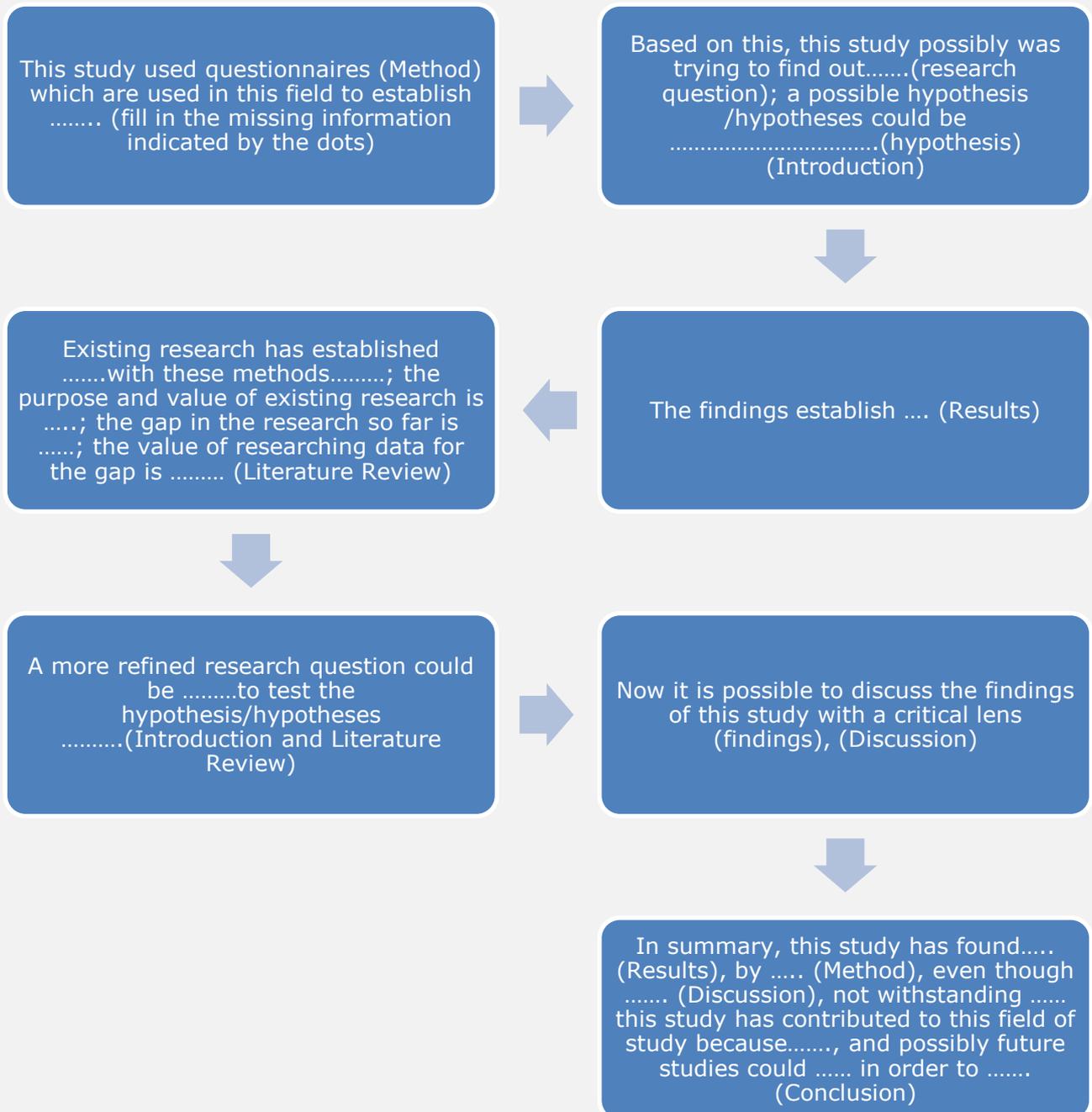
- Read the unit outline from cover to cover
- Check your class space for resources about writing a lab report for specific assignments
- Attend all unit sessions whether on campus or online; Educators cover the assignment requirements and often give whole sessions to writing lab reports
- Attend the unit session scheduled for the experiment
- Attend Peer Assisted Study Sessions available for the units PSYC1022 and PSYC1032
- Get clear about what you are reporting; the research question and the hypothesis define the focus of the report
- Put your deductive thinking cap on

Check the APA Website (www.apastyle.org) and the APA Style Blog (www.blog.apastyle.org) for information on structure, format and writing style according to APA 6.

- Try the 'creating a research story' strategy on the following page.

Creating the research story from the Method and Results

A useful way to construct a Lab Report is to create a research story. The storyline might go like this:



Tip: Use the information in the sections provided as clues. For example, when analysing the method, identify the information that could relate to the research question. Then select key words for a literature search.

Example of headings formatted according to APA Style

Anxiety Made Visible: Multiple Reports of Anxiety and Rejection Sensitivity

Our study investigated anxiety and rejection sensitivity. In particular, we examined how participant self-ratings of state and trait anxiety and rejection sensitivity would differ from the ratings of others, namely, the close friends of participants.

Heading level 1 should be centered and in bold. Each main word should start with a capital letter.

Literature Overview

Anxiety and rejection sensitivity are two important facets of psychological functioning that have received much attention in the literature. For example, Ronen and Baldwin (2010) demonstrated...

Method

Heading level 2 should be left aligned and in bold. Each main word should start with a capital letter.

Participants

Participants were 80 university students (35 men, 45 women) whose mean age was 20.25 years ($SD = 1.68$). Approximately 70% of participants were European American, 15% were African American, 9% were Hispanic American, and 6% were Asian American. They received course credit for their participation.

Procedure

Heading level 3 should be indented and in bold. Only the first letter of the first word should be capitalised, as well as the first letter of the first word after a colon. The heading should end with a full stop. The paragraph begins straight after the heading (i.e. in line with the heading).

Recruitment. We placed flyers about the study on bulletin boards around campus, and the study was included on the list of open studies on the Psychology Department website. To reduce bias in the sample, we described the study as a “personality study” rather than specifically mentioning our target traits of anxiety and rejection sensitivity.

Session 1: Psychiatric diagnoses. During the initial interview session, doctoral level psychology students assessed participants for psychiatric diagnoses. Eighteen percent of the sample met the criteria for generalized anxiety disorder according to the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM–IV Axis I Disorders (First, Gibbon, Spitzer, & Williams, 1996).

Session 2: Assessments. All participants attended a follow-up session to complete assessments. Participants were instructed to bring a friend with them who would complete the other-report measures.

From: APA Style Blog. (2011). How to use five levels of heading in an APA Style paper. Retrieved from <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2011/04/how-to-use-five-levels-of-heading-in-an-apa-style-paper.html>