

Writing the Results

The results section is the direct line to what you observed during your research.

The results are not subject to the author's *interpretation* of the data.

- No biases
- No hopes
- No opinions

Interpretations of data may change over time, but the data should remain valid forever.

In the results section, you summarize findings using tables, figures, and words. It is:

- Not the place to discuss why the experiment was performed.
- Not the place to discuss how the experiment was performed.
- Not the place to discuss whether the results were expected, unexpected, disappointing, or interesting.

Simply present results, drawing the reader's attention to major observations and key trends in the data.

Remember, **NO** interpretation, and do not make the reader interpret either.

Guide the reader to and through the important data

Let figures and tables do the work for you (next lecture), but draw attention to these with your words.

Let your words draw the reader's attention to patterns in the data, and then let the figure or table solidify that pattern.

Always present your results in the **past tense** and in the same order as the experimentation presented in the Materials and Methods

Explaining in the past tense clearly reports the result of *this* experiment, not any other experiment

Example:

Past: Caterpillars fed at faster rates on diet A.

Present: Caterpillars feed at faster rates on diet A.

Explaining in the same order as the experimentation presented in the Materials and Methods keeps the reader on track and does not promote any level of importance to the results.

Writing about numbers

Use numeral rather than words when writing about:

- counted or measured items
- percentages
- magnifications

For example:

- 100 ml
- 6 soils
- 1.5 times greater

But, use words rather than numerals when beginning a sentence with a number or percentage

Example:

Twenty grams of NaCl were added to each of 4 flasks.

Thirty percent of the tadpoles metamorphosed by the end of the second week.

Note that when switched around, the first sentence might read:

To each of 4 flasks we added 20 g of NaCl.

When two numbers are written adjacent to each other without being separated by words or a comma, write one of the numbers in words.

Example:

To each of four 50 ml flasks we added 20 g of NaCl.

When using ordinal numbers, use words for the first 9 numbers and numerals for the others

...the third replicate...

...the 50th percentile...

But be consistent within a series:

...the 5th, 10th and 20th replicate...

not

...the fifth, 10th and 20th replicate...

Use scientific notation when writing about very large or small numbers.

5×10^5 cells/ml or 5×10^5 cells ml⁻¹

rather than

500,000 cells per ml

It is generally acceptable to only use a comma in number GREATER than four digits.

Only 1073 of the original 12,540 frogs died during the study.